

# **The Beginning of Memory**

## **Oral Histories on the Lost Villages of the Aleutians**

by

Nicholai S. Lekanoff  
Nicholai Galaktionoff  
Eva Tcheripanoff  
Irene Makarin  
Moses Gordieff

A report to the National Park Service,  
The Aleutian Pribilof Islands Restitution Trust,  
and the Ounalashka Corporation

Introduced and edited by  
Raymond Hudson

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Raymond Hudson  
15 South Gorham Lane  
Middlebury, VT 05753  
(802) 388-6867  
rhudson@together.net

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# The Beginning of Memory

## Part One: Historical Background

### 1. Introduction

When I was a young baby and I was just starting to remember things, I remember looking out the window and seeing that everything was white. I was holding a watch in my hand. My mother was holding me by the window when this awareness came over me. I remember later it was summer, and the people were catching fish for drying.

Nicholai Galaktionoff<sup>1</sup>

Little did Nicholai Galaktionoff know, but the watch he was holding was running out of time. In a few years Makushin Village on Unalaska Island would dissolve. The majority of the Makushin people would move twenty miles around the island's great volcano to Unalaska Village, the economic and religious center of the eastern Aleutians. They would find themselves outsiders. Nick would discover that his language locked more doors than it opened. But at the time he was beginning to remember not even the adults in Makushin could have foreseen the end coming so rapidly. The village was stable. Men worked for wages each summer in the Pribilof Island fur seal harvest. They returned in September, in time to catch and preserve salmon for subsistence use. During the winter they trapped fox and sold the pelts at Unalaska.

The eldest of the four participants in this project, Nicholai S. Lekanoff, was born at Makushin on June 4, 1925. In 1937 his father moved the family to Unalaska, perhaps driven away by the autocratic storekeeper Pete Olsen. At Unalaska Village (or Iliuliuk as Eva Tcheripanoff still called it when speaking in Aleut in 2004), Nick served as an alter boy with Bishop Alexy (Panteleev) and Father Theodosia. This began services to the Church of the Holy Ascension that would continue as starosta (warden) throughout his life. After World War Two he married Pauline Kudrin from Kashega.

Nicholai Galaktionoff was born at Makushin on December 19, 1925. Following the death of his father and two other men in 1937, he and his siblings moved to Unalaska with their mother and paternal grandmother.<sup>ii</sup> Following the war, he married Irene Ermeloff of Biorka and was closely associated with the brief resettlement of that village. While working and living with older Unangan, Nick absorbed stories and traditions rooted in the 19<sup>th</sup> and late 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Fourteen miles south-southwestward of Makushin, the village of Kashega was thriving. Unlike at Makushin, the men from Kashega did not regularly work in the Pribilof Islands.<sup>iii</sup> There was usually enough summer employment at the sheep ranches at Chernofski and at Kashega itself. Occasional salmon and cod fishing was another source of employment. A codfish cannery had once existed at Kuliliak Bay, on the Pacific side of the island opposite the village. There was a store at Kashega. In a few years, a school would be established.

Eva Tcheripanoff was born here in 1928. Her mother, Sophie (Borenin) Kudrin, was from Chernofski but had moved to Kashega as a child. Eva lived in the village until the wartime evacuation. Following the war, she married John Tcheripanoff of Akutan and soon afterwards settled at Unalaska.

The year Eva was born, people at Chernofski recognized the fact that their village, eight miles southwest from Kashega, could no longer survive. The people tore down the chapel dedicated to the Epiphany, indication of a determined evacuation.<sup>iv</sup> The families collected their personal belongings and waited on the beach for the first boat to come along. Henry Swanson arrived, skippering the *Alasco-4*. “The sheep ranch that had been established there,” he said, “wasn’t doing them any good so far as making a living went. There were just so few of them left they figured they might as well move.” Henry said there were only a dozen people, counting the children and an old blind man. He left a few people at Kashega with the goods from the church; and then he took others, including the chief, Alex Gordieff, to Unalaska. George Yatchmenoff, another resident, went to Biorka.

Biorka Village was on the northern end of Sedanka Island, essentially an extension of an eastern arm of Unalaska Island although separated by the deep Udagak Strait. To reach the village from Unalaska, a vessel left the harbor and circled north and east, passing Kalekta and English bays before entering Beaver Inlet. The village lay a mile across the inlet. Although poor, the village had good leadership and the people got by with occasional summer jobs and fox trapping in the winter. Biorka people would skiff down and across the inlet, pull ashore at Ugadaga Bay, and hike a well-worn trail to Unalaska.

Born at Unlaska in 1930, Irene Makarin was raised at Biorka. Her mother died around 1932 and she was adopted, with her father’s consent, by Andrew and Ester (Eustina) Makarin, leaders in the Biorka community. She lived at Biorka until evacuated at the start of World War Two. Following the war, she married William (Coco) Yatchmenoff, son of the George Yatchmenoff who had come from Chernofski. Irene was part of the resettlement of Biorka after the war.

At the end of the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these four settlements formed a loosely united whole with Unalaska Village (Iliuliuk) in the center. None was completely independent, not even Unalaska. This mutual reliance had historic roots dating back at

least to 1763 when these villages were part of a confederacy that annihilated almost 200 Russians in a series of coordinated attacks in the Fox Islands. This reliance had been reshaped through new economic, political, and religious ties in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Religion and economics frequently overlapped as in 1891 when the residents of these four settlements joined with those from Nikolski and Akutan to formally contribute to the construction of a new church at Unalaska through deposits with the Alaska Commercial Company.<sup>V</sup> During the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, inter-village familial bonds were re-enforced by a common dialect or very closely related dialects of Aleut and by common subsistence practices. The villages operated politically with independent village chiefs who acknowledged one paramount chief, Alexei Yatchemev of Unalaska. A similar system had existed in the church since the 1830s in which village lay readers were overseen by a priest or priests resident at Unalaska.

The fifth village in this project, Attu, was almost 800 miles west of Unalaska. Although the history of none of these villages can stand entirely independently, the geographical and cultural distance between Attu and the villages on Unalaska Island are such that Attu must be treated separately. Although their history is laced with contact with the eastern villages, the Attu people retained a unique identity to the end.

Long before 1926, of course, the exclusivity of distinct Aleut communities had been shattered. Soon after the arrival of westerners in the mid-eighteenth century the eight relatively distinct groups of Aleuts had been reduced to five with the loss of the Qax<sup>un</sup> or Qax<sup>us</sup> (inhabitants of the Rat Islands), the Naahmig<sup>us</sup> (people of the Delarof Islands), and the Akuug<sup>un</sup> (people of the Islands of Four Mountains). Over the next century, the surviving groups declined in numbers and localities from a variety of causes including voluntary and involuntary resettlement programs. By the Alaska Purchase in 1867 the Sasignan people of the Near Islands were found only on Attu (plus a transplanted colony on Bering Island in the Commander Islands.) In the central Aleutians, the Andreanof Islands, only the Niig<sup>ug</sup><sup>is</sup> on Atka and Amlia remained. (There was also a settlement of Niig<sup>ug</sup><sup>is</sup> on Copper Islands in the Commanders.) In the eastern islands, three groups survived: Qawalangin, Qigiig<sup>un</sup>, and Qagaan Tayag<sup>ungin</sup>. The



border between the Qawalangin, living from Umnak to Cape Wislow in the eastern part of Unalaska, and the Qigiig^un, found on the eastern part of Unalaska, on Sedanka, and throughout the Krenitzin Islands, was shifting. Biorka Village on Sedanka was creating stronger ties with Unalaska Village. Qigiig^un from the three surviving villages in the Krenitzin Islands moved to a single new settlement established on Akutan shortly after the Alaska Purchase. Finally, the Qagaan Tayag^ungin on Unimak Island, the Alaska Peninsula, and the adjacent islands survived in 7 villages. These villages, more than any other Aleutian communities, would be dramatically altered in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century by the permanent settlement of large numbers of Scandinavian men and the relocation of traditional villages.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century men from different regions worked together, employed by the Russian-American Company, the Alaska Commercial Company, the North American Commercial Company, and private entrepreneurs. This mixing was most frequent during sea otter hunts in the Alaska Peninsula/Unimak area and in the fur seal harvests of the Pribilof Islands. People from the Andreanof and the Fox islands were rotated in temporary settlements in the Pribilof Islands shortly after their discovery by the Russians in 1786. These fur seal hunting camps gradually evolved into permanent villages on St. Paul and St. George although rotations were still occurring as late as 1824.<sup>vi</sup> Attu people mingled with Atkans and both with people from the eastern villages. Formerly distinct dialects began to take on more common characteristics. (By 1881 Turner felt the Attu language had been irretrievably corrupted by other Aleut speakers and that only Atkan and the eastern dialects remained strong.) The disappearance of smaller autonomous villages within a region necessitated more and more marriages between people from distant regions. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, traditional pride and regional rivalry in a host of cultural components still existed, but the distinctions were blurring. For example, weaving techniques and patterns once exclusive to Attu began to appear on baskets from Kashega and Unalaska. Even Michael Hodikoff, the man who would become the last chief of Attu and assert his independence from Alexei Yatchmenev of Unalaska, would be educated as a child at Unalaska.

A summary of events from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, events preceding the earliest memories of the participants in this project, will provide a context for recollections of childhoods spent with parents and grandparents who lived through these events. The contributors to this oral history were teenagers when their villages were swept into World War Two. They reached adulthood during the mass removal known as “the evacuation.” Although residents of each village in the Chain experienced the war differently, at its conclusion the people from Kashega, Makushin, and Biorka were washed ashore, uprooted, homeless. The residents of Akutan, St. George, St. Paul, Unalaska, Nikolski, and Atka went home. The people from Kashega, Makushin and Biorka could not. (Nor could Attuans, whose story lies outside this report.) They became what many people, but few Americans, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century became: refugees displaced by war. The events from 1939 to 1945 had reshaped the Aleutians and in the new configuration there was no space for small subsistence villages.

## **2. Biorka, Makushin, Kashega, and Chernofski in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

This is the period that saw the birth and adult lives of the grandparents of the four participants in this report.

The Beaver Inlet settlement of Bobrovskaiia in Deep Bay, where Captain James Cook and his men had visited in 1778, was abandoned in favor of a new site around 1848. The new location was on Sedanka Island facing across the wide Beaver Inlet towards the earlier settlement. Biorka (sometimes spelled Borka) was occasionally referred to as "Cedanak village." [See Irene Makarin’s important and subtle distinction between “Biorka” and “Borka” in the transcript of her remarks.] The census enumerators from 1867 to 1890 noted a population composed almost entirely of "pure-blooded" Aleuts. This probably reflects the degree of observable acculturation rather than

hereditary bloodlines. The population records show an increase from around 100 in the 1870s to an improbable 140 in the 1880s. This decreased to around 50 during the 1890s.

Biorka was famous for its well-built, clean, and attractive barabaras. Undoubtedly because of the number of successful sea otter hunters, by 1877 the Alaska Commercial Company had built a few frame cottages at Biorka. Ivan Petroff's writings are permeated with infamous fabrications that render his work useless without collaboration. While in the Aleutians in 1878, he visited Biorka and later raved about the village:

The strange and subtle influence of the method and manner of living practiced by an old trader who was and is their leader, one Gregory Krukov, is strikingly illustrated there to-day. This man and his wife are singularly neat in their manner of living; they keep everything clean about them, and in the summer decorate their house tastefully with wild flowers. The natives, under the influence of his example, are living in their barrabaras, the neatest and cleanest of their people in all Alaska. They are living so without an exceptional instance, every house being as orderly and as tidy as its neighbor. They put large windows into their barrabaras, sand and scrub the floors, and [keep] their furniture, their beds, and window-panes tidy and bright, while pots and tumblers filled with wild flowers stand on the tables and window-sills.<sup>vii</sup>

Visiting Biorka a few years later after Gregory Krukov had died, Henry W. Elliott noticed no changes as he reported there were twenty-eight buildings— frame houses, barabaras, and a chapel (dedicated to St. Nicholas).<sup>viii</sup>

In the winter the Biorka men trapped fox for sale to the A. C. Company. In spring or summer they joined sea otter hunting expeditions to the otter grounds around Sanak and the Shumagin Islands. For example, on June 7, 1878, eleven baidarkas arrived at Iliuliuk from Biorka with eighteen men to join the hunting party destined for Sannak. On occasion the schooner transporting men to Sannak would stop at Biorka and save men the

trip to the company headquarters. Petroff stated that Biorka hunters secured as many as 1400 seal skins in one season as the fur seals came through Unalga Pass. An 1878-79 log book from the Alaska Commercial Company records several sales of otter and fox. Biorka people donated sea otter skins either to the main church at Unalaska or to their local chapel as was shown by the May 23, 1878, entry in the A. C. Company log: "Received from Burka Station Unalaska Church 3 1/2 sea otters. Received from Burka Church 1/2 sea otter."

In 1881 the Biorka settlement was struck by an epidemic of "typhoid pneumonia." When Captain Hooper visited in May four had died and eighteen remained in serious condition. This respiratory disease appeared at Unalaska and spread to St. Paul, Unga, Kodiak, Cook Inlet, and Prince William Sound.<sup>ix</sup> The appearance of such an illness was particularly severe in a village like Biorka, small, isolated, without a physician. Although the A. C. Company physician, when in residence at Unalaska, would travel occasionally to these outlying villages, during an epidemic he would, of course, need to remain at Unalaska where the population was concentrated.

The decline in sea otter populations brought an economic depression. In compiling the 1890 census Samuel Applegate found Biorka drastically reduced in population and resources:

The village contains 57 native Aleuts and a Russian creole trader, who live in neat and comfortable dwellings, though many of them are but sod huts. Borka was also once a quite prosperous hunting community, which the gradual disappearance of sea otters has reduced to comparative poverty. The hunters still join the parties sent to the reefs of Sannak every season, but they bring but few skins back with them. Fortunately the natural food supply of these natives, derived chiefly from the ocean, is as abundant as ever.<sup>x</sup>

In 1897 Hooper recorded 48 residents. The 1900 census listed 33 at the “new village” and 23 at the “old village.” This reflects people using the old village as a summer fish camp, not the presence of two permanent villages. As will be seen, the site of the “old village” would be “located” or claimed in 1918 as property belonging to the Biorka people.

The three villages of Makushin, Kashega, and Chernofksi were located on the southern half of Unalaska Island. Contact with Unalaska Village was maintained through periodic arrivals of sailing vessels or steamers, and, more frequently, by visitors in kayaks. In addition to these sea voyages there was a route from Portage Bay near the head of Makushin Bay overland to Captains Bay where a trail continued to Iliuliuk. A kayak or skiff would sometimes be used to reach the main settlement from the head of Captains Bay. Sarychev traversed the trail in 1790. Father Shaiashnikov recorded its use in the early 1860’s.

As with other villages, these three were inexorably bound to the success of the seasonal removal of sea otter hunters to the Shumagin and Sanak islands off the Alaska Peninsula. At home men hunted fur seals and sea otter. They trapped red fox, cross fox, black fox, and silver fox. Occasionally the agent at Unalaska sent men to these villages to collect furs as on December 4, 1878: “Sent to Makooshine 2 3-hold Bardakas with 5 men—for fur Seals—with some provision and 300 pounds Salt.” This party returned on December 9<sup>th</sup> with the fur seal pelts.

Several entries in the Alaska Commercial Company Unalaska log book for 1878-1879<sup>x1</sup> combine deliveries from Makushin, Kashega, and Chernofski and consequently it is not possible to determine accurately the income for each village. Chernofski appears to have been the most successful in hunting sea otter and trapping fox. On May 30, 1878, they sent 73 sea otters, 118 cross fox, 336 red fox, and 669 fur seals to Unalaska. Again on August 9, 1878, they were reported to have 73 sea otter skins on hand. However, the winter of 1878-79 was severe and prevented hunting:

March 24, 1879: Agent from Tchernofsky arrived and reported that was very bad winter people could not hunt—only 15 Sea Otters through the winter killed.

On June 12, 1879, Chernofski produced 32 sea otters, 161 red fox, 69 cross fox, 16 black fox, and 479 fur seal skins. Petroff referred to Chernofski as being “situated on a very beautiful little bay and harbor of the same name. . . . It consists of 101 souls, the usual chapel, and 16 barabaras.” A later account describes Chernofski as “situated on the shingle isthmus at the northern end of the harbour and consists of the church, which is a white building with a red roof, three storehouses and about a dozen huts. The north-eastern side of the anchorage is formed by high hills, which ascend to the mountains of the interior. the shore line trends for over a mile from the village in a south-easterly direction to a point where there is low marshy ground.”<sup>xii</sup>

Petroff’s description of Kashega is brief: “an insignificant settlement of 73 people, on the bay of the same name, on the northwest coast. They have a small chapel [dedicated to the Transfiguration of Our Lord] and are living in 17 barrabaras.”<sup>xiii</sup> Petroff’s journal records no visit to either community.

The author of the 1880 census did visit Makushin Village at Volcano Bay in August 1878 where he found “a very poor village of 50 inhabitants, with a chapel [dedicated to the Nativity of Christ], but no store.”<sup>xiv</sup> He took the overland trail to Portage Bay. His description of Makushin in the census refers to the new village site inside the bay.

The people of Makushin are mere auxiliaries of the inhabitants of Oonalashka village, and furnish a contingent every year for the regular sea-otter hunting party that leaves Iliuliuk for Sannakh. They have an opportunity better than that enjoyed by any other settlement in their country to capture the young fur-seals in their passage through the straits

of Oomnak in the fall, securing between 1000 and 1,300 of these animals every year. Their fishing grounds were so disturbed in 1878, by the volcanic eruption on Oomnak Island, that they were compelled to move their old village [at Volcano Bay] to the present site, and here they will undoubtedly remain.

The 1878 volcanic activity was widespread. “Violent volcanic eruptions are reported from several of the Aleutian Isles in the North Pacific,” reported whalers arriving in Honolulu. “The high volcanoes upon Amukta and Tshegula [Chig^ulax^, renamed Herbert Island in 1894] sent forth gigantic columns of smoke and copious streams of lava, and the same was the case with the mountain upon Umnak, which reaches a height of 2,800 metres. On the island of Unalashka an earthquake accompanied by a tidal wave totally destroyed the village of Makushin on August 29.”<sup>xv</sup>

“Some natives arrived at the village [Iliuliuk] this morning from Makushin village,” wrote Petroff on September 2, “with news of disaster caused by the overflowing of rivers and lakes from volcanic action. The craters on nearly all the islands of the Aleutian Chain have shown signs of waking up this summer and Mr. Lunievsky informs me that last Friday morning at 2 a.m. he felt a severe shock of earthquake. (August 30).”<sup>xvi</sup> Petroff dated the move of Makushin Village from Volcano Bay to a site on the inside of the bay to early 1879. On moving, he wrote, the people tore down their barabaras and transported all the lumber and timbers to the new site.<sup>xvii</sup>

In 1867 the combined populations of these three villages was 180. In 1878 this number had grown to 201; however, by 1890 it had dropped to 148.

	1867	1878	1890
Makushin	49	60	51
Kashega	69	81	46
Chernofski	62	60	51
Total	180	201	148

The 1885-1889 copy book of the Alaska Commercial Company at Unalaska<sup>xviii</sup> has numerous letters addressed by the general agent at Unalaska (usually Rudolph Neumann) to agents in the outer villages. Letters were dispatched from Unalaska by kayak. Travel in the skin boat was comparatively rapid and the general agent was thus able to inform the village stations of the imminent arrival of a larger vessel. The letters detail how the A. C. Company regulated hunting practices. Any goods beyond basic subsistence foods and skins had to be purchased or traded from the company. Chiefs were appointed and dismissed by company agents. The construction of chapels (from scratch or by renovation of an existing structure) was done through the company. (This reached its apex when the company contracted to rebuild or enlarge the church at Unalaska, reconsecrated in 1896.)

#### Copybook Excerpts

(Name spellings are as in the original.)

*October 15, 1885, to Chernofski:* Alexander Belioff has been made chief in place of Michael Gordeoff. Bonifanty Yatchmenoff and Ivan Borenin ask permission to live in the W. F. T. Co's [Western Fur and Trading Company] Store, they want a few boards to erect a partition in the place. Ivan Borenin also asks for a stove, let him have one. Gregory Borenin says you have charged him with 4 Fox traps, Perfin Goharin has taken 3 from him manage the matter between them, How is it that Lazar Gordeoff owes on your books \$364. What is it for? inform us by return of vessel. Ship the gravel.

*November 25, 1885, to Chernofski:* Breech loading shotgun I have none on hand. The Kamlikas [seal or sea lion gut raincoats] sent you per "Turner" [the schooner *Matthew Turner*] I know to be badly sewed and wrote you to have them resewen, we have no intestines, and hence must do the best we can with the material we have. I told your party so on their



return here. You wrote you have enough luvtak [*laftaki*, sea lion skins for covering the skin boat] for the winter “but in the spring” you have not finished what you intended to say, but I presume you mean you may not have enough. [Note how by this date the most traditional of material goods—clothing and skin boats—were (at least in part) supplied by the company.]

*January 22, 1886, to Chernofski:* Enclosed you will find. . . list of natives belonging to your station which you will return to us in the Spring marking those natives who are dead and absent and where they are, also correct spelling of names in your ledger. [This list included men living at Kashega.]

*January 28, 1886, to Chernofski:* We are surprised at you again changing the chief, after you yourself having applied for Alexander Belioff and it would seem as if you did not know how to handle your men. You should have reported here before installing Lazar Gordeoff [see September 14, 1886] and until the party comes over here on their way to Sanak you will leave Alec. Belioff alone. If he does not then [sail] a new chief will be appointed here.

For the present leave W. Yatchmenoff’s debt in his name and do not transfer to his sons.

*September 2, 1886, to Chernofski:* The Sch. “Matthew Turner” leaves tomorrow for your place, by her the Sanak party returns of which find accounts enclosed. . . . You also receive the luvtak you want for your party next spring, which have ready by the end of March 87. The 3 hatch bidarka you took from here you must return we want it as well as the paddle and aprons [spray skirts].

The price of tea is reduced to 75 cents a pound and Kenh Leaf Tobacco to 40 cents.

*November 29, 1886, to Chernofski:* You will please put dates on tag when the sea otters are caught name of hunter, etc, same as the tag which we enclose and also report whenever a native comes from Ounalaska with a sea otter which he did not sell here.

Where did Dionese Kholinof get his sea otter which he gave to Tchernofski church, received per Turner Sept. 10/86 \$60.00 — did he bring it with him from Ounalaska?

Report by return bydarka the amount of furs which you have on hand.

*April 19, 1887, to Makushin:* The Str. “Dora”, after having been to Tchernofski and Kashiga, will call at your place and you will immediately put your party on board and dispatch them for here. You will also send their accounts along and ship all furs you have on hand. You will have to stay at the station and get your goods ready for taking stock, your wife and your things you can ship this time if you want to.

*September 13, 1887, to Chernofski:* Enclosed you receive the transfer of the debts and credits of your natives, which you will properly enter. I also call your attention to the prices I paid them which are big and I want you to collect on every man’s debt so that they reduce the outstanding’s on your station. Say for instance, Artemon Yatchmenef owes \$684.65 his furs amount to \$242.00 he took at Ounalaska \$30.00 so you can let him have \$100.00 to 120 more, you will of course act the same to all the natives that are in debt.

There seems to be a law prohibiting the killing of fur seals for food even, by our natives, the company has hence instructed us not to ship any more fur seals to San Francisco. You will therefore try and keep your natives from killing many of these animals. I know they have to kill some

to live but I want you to buy as few skins as possible, and have therefore shipped you also less salt.

*December 7, 1887, to Chernofski:* The Schr. "Fowler" arrived today from San Francisco and by her I have notice that furs have declined in price. You will therefore in future pay less for all Sea Otter and other furs purchased at your station.

*March 29, 1888. to Chernofski:* The oilcloth for church you will not get until fall as it will not be on hand.

Have your party ready for first vessel, The "Dora" will likely be arrived at your place in about ten days, as we expect her here almost daily.

*May 9, 1888, to Chernofski:* The person wishing to buy the house of which you spoke to Best about you may dispose of for 4 good sea otters, and that when sold it must be moved from where it now stands.

*September 14, 1888, to Chernofski:* The Str. "Dora" leaves tomorrow for your port via way-ports. She brings your winter supplies as well as your returning hunting party, invoices and transfers of accounts find enclosed. Lazar Gordeief died on Woznesenski, I forward a box with his belongings to his wife, his rifle I have retained here. [On August 7, 1889, the Agent wrote: "Let Lazar Gordeaf's wife stay where she is, if she wants to go to Attou we will see about it next spring."]

In regard to the Kashega people you can let them have the building they wanted to buy at their place for a church.

Ship all furs on hand. If any winter party comes for Sanak do not send their wives.

*February 1889, to Makushin:* You will please send over to this place all the sinew that you can spare, just keeping enough for your own Bydarkas. . . . Copy sent in Russian.

*February 16, 1889, to Makushin:* I hear that your natives found a whale last fall so that they are well supplied with sinew. If you can buy 10 lbs from them paying 1.00 a pound forward it to Oumnak along with a bill for same. Should you not be able to get the sinew let Adolph Reinken [agent at Chernofski] know so that he may supply them.

*August 7, 1889, to Chernofski:* Enclosed you receive the transfers of the hunters that have returned from Seal Cape, you will have to be careful about increasing their debts as a rule do not let them draw more than their cash amounts to, if possible see that their accounts are reduced, and only in extreme cases, where there is actual poverty or want let them overdraw.

Reduce the price of wood and sell two pieces for 25 cents.

*August 19, 1889, to Chernofski:* The natives say they have no matting for the church, we shipped you some, why do not you deliver it?

\* \* \* \* \*

All three of these villages found themselves sinking deeper and deeper into debt to the Alaska Commercial Company. In 1884 Kashega owed the company \$4,738.08. This increased to \$6,363.49 in 1889. Chernovski's 1884 debt of \$2,927.70 grew by 1889 to \$5,971.50. This was bondage of extraordinary proportions from which there was no escape.<sup>xix</sup>

In writing the narrative for the 1890 census, Samuel Applegate (a long time resident of Unalaska and the owner of a sea otter hunting vessel) supplied the following description of Makushin:

On the northeastern shore of Unalaska island a small native settlement exists at the mouth of the bay of Makushin, containing 51 Aleut natives, who maintain themselves by joining the sea-otter parties and by trapping during the winter. Their dwellings are sod huts, and they have a small log chapel, sadly in need of repairs. Mount Makushin, an extinct volcano, looms up to the northward of the little village, and to the eastward extends the vast bay for over 20 miles, its dark, rocky shore colored here and there with the green mounds of long deserted settlements.<sup>XX</sup>

Applegate, who usually recruited his sea otter hunters from Nikolski, next described Kashega and Chernofksi.

A few miles to the southward of Makushin there is another small settlement of natives known as Kashigin, or Kashiga, and containing between 40 and 50 people, who depend entirely upon hunting and fishing for their subsistence. Fish are very abundant, and the hunters reap quite a harvest of fur-seal skins by hunting the animals at the time of their migration to and from the islands through the pass between Unalaska and Umnak islands. The same may be said of the village of Chernovsky, near the southwestern extremity of the island, but the people of this settlement have the additional advantage of a resort for sea otters in their immediate vicinity among the reefs and kelp beds which fringe this desolate coast. At Chernovsky a trading store was maintained for many years, but it has now been abandoned. The dwellings are chiefly sod huts, but comfortably kept, and a neat little chapel was erected during the more prosperous times of the past.

In 1897 Hooper recorded 71 residents at Makushin, 52 at Kashega, and 60 at Chernofski, for a total of 183. The 1900 census, however, dropped the number to 168

with 66 people at Makushin, 49 at Kashega, and 53 at Chernofski. Economic conditions had worsened. As noted above, the A. C. Company had closed its store at Chernofski by 1890. By 1897 the stores at Makushin and Kashega were also closed.

### 3. The Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The first two decades of the 20th century saw unprecedented hardship for these villages. During these years, the parents of the participants in this oral history reached adulthood. The similarities that had existed among Biorka, Makushin, Kashega, and Chernofski during the sea otter hunting years faded once villages were forced to rely on local resources. Each village (with the possible exception of Chernofski) had sufficient fish, shellfish, birds and sea mammals for subsistence, but for none of these villages was subsistence any longer enough. Cash or credit income had become a necessity.

Sea otter hunting remained a nominal source of income during the first decade. In reality, the number of otters had so markedly decreased that they were not a primary source of village income. Hunting was no longer dominated by one company through its agents and company-sanctioned hunting chiefs. Individuals, like Samuel Applegate of Unalaska and San Francisco, had entered the business. The last sea otter hunt took place in 1911. There were 19 otters taken by the two vessels hunting out of Unalaska that season.<sup>xxi</sup> On December 14, 1911, an international convention prohibited sea otter hunting. A detailed account of the 1910 hunt exists in Henry Swanson's reminiscences.<sup>xxii</sup> The 24 hunters aboard the *Elvira* that year came from Biorka, Makushin, Kashega, Chernofski and Unalaska. Apart from the sea otter hunt, men increasingly worked in the Pribilof Islands fur seal harvest. They trapped fox and began "fox farming" by leasing and stocking uninhabited islands. They came to Unalaska Village to earn occasional wages.

Information on village conditions for this period is found in reports from officers aboard various Revenue Cutter and (after 1915) Coast Guard Cutter vessels. Periodic inspections were occasions to deliver seal meat from the Pribilof Islands and to provide emergency health care. In 1911, for example, 600 barrels of seal meat and 100 kegs of seal oil were prepared at St. Paul for distribution to Akutan, Kashega, Chernofski, Attu, Atka, Makushin, and Biorka.

The *Tahoma* visited Makushin in August 1911.<sup>xxiii</sup> The chief of the village, Elia Shapsnikoff (1869 - 1935, great uncle of Eva Tcheripanoff, one of the consultants for this project), returned from Unalaska on this trip. “Their resources are in hunting, fishing, and basket making,” wrote Captain Joynes, “there being, I am informed by their chief, an abundance of fish and ducks in the bay, and some ptarmigan and a few foxes in the surrounding mountains. The men occasionally obtain a few days’ employment in Unalaska, with which place they have communication by trail, and there dispose of their skins at a ruinous rate of trade with the Alaska Commercial Company, the most inimical factor in this country to the natives.” He found the village had a small church, three frame houses and 10 barabaras. The people suffered from “favus, trachoma pediculosis, pulmonary tuberculosis and kindred complaints” which the ship’s physician attributed to “the poor ventilation of their dwellings” along with poor personal hygiene.

At Kashega he found the people better clothed and cleaner. The village had a church, a store-house for dried fish, two frame buildings and ten barabras. Although fish and fox were reportedly scarce, there was waterfowl in abundance. Chernofski was the poorest village. “This village,” wrote Joynes, “consisting of a small church, two dilapidated wooden structures, and eight barabras, was the poorest one visited. . . . “ Another visitor aboard the *Tahoma* in 1911, Alexander Wetmore, reported that the men had trapped about 80 red fox the previous year. At the time of his visit, however, the men “had started for Unalaska with the skins, in bidarkies, before I came. They depend here upon their skins for flour, tea and sugar and were in a wretched condition worse than in any other village visited. They were however,” he wrote referring to one purpose for

his visit, “too much taken up with the Priest [Alexander Panteleev] who accompanied us and the services he held to pay attention to my offer to buy [fox] skulls.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

A 1912 report stated, “. . . oftentimes during the winter they are in dire straits for want of food which is due, I believe[,] to the absence of salmon in their immediate vicinity upon which, I understand, they greatly depend for food.”<sup>xxv</sup> That same year H. O. Schablen, Superintendent of the Southwestern District for the Alaska School System described Chernofski. “The natives at the village of Chernofski on Unalaska island are the most destitute and their needs the most urgent. The village is located on the western most end of the island, and is built on the narrow neck of a peninsula about two hundred yards wide, where the sea on both sides can be watched for sea otter, and in the sea otter days was a good location for a village. There is no good salmon stream within reach, and it is therefore now a very poor location. Cod fish is their main food, and a few foxes bring them a little cash. They go to Unalaska and get a little work.

“I asked them,” he wrote, “why they did not move away from there and they answered that their houses were there and that they could not very well move since they had no houses at any other place.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

In 1911 Biorka was described as “unclean and unsanitary.” People subsisted primarily on fish “of which there is an ample supply in the vicinity.” Fox trapping in the winter was supplemented by occasional work at Unalaska and some basket weaving by women. “The amount of money realized by the community must be very small in comparison to their needs for food and clothing.”<sup>xxvii</sup>

“Attention has been brought repeatedly to the wretched condition of the natives of the Aleutian Islands,” wrote D. P. Foley in 1911. He was Senior Captain of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service and commander of the Bering Sea Patrol Fleet. “There is nothing much to add to the reports previously made concerning them, except, if possible, their wretchedness is greater, and of course will increase year by year until the



Government does something for them, or until they are wiped out of existence by disease and starvation.”

His proposed solution was to concentrate everyone in a single settlement, Iliuliuk. “At first, only the people of the most destitute villages—Attu, Chernofski, Biorka, and Kashega—should be brought in, 153 souls, about 36 families. There is plenty of room in Unalaska for dwellings. The Alaska Commercial Co., in addition to occupying the [military, i.e. Coast Guard] reservation and inclosing a large pasture field near the lake, has a corral about one-third the size of an average city block within the limits of the village. It should vacate this latter piece of ground. The Jesse Lee Home, a missionary school, has inclosed about six times as much land as it will ever have use for. An expenditure of about \$25,000 would provide suitable homes for this addition to the present population, and about \$10,000 more would provide ample waterworks—an absolute necessity to the sanitation of the village.”

This was a proposal he had made before. In 1910 he acknowledged that villagers were opposed to the idea of resettlement. On that occasion he wanted the people from Akutan, Makushin and Kashega moved to Chernofski. “Like other people,” he wrote, “they have a love for their native places and are moreover remnants of tribes that once waged bitter warfare against one another and some of the old animosities still live though the war spirit is dead. . . .”<sup>xxviii</sup>

Foley respected Aleuts and wanted them freed from poverty and dependence on charity. “This is but little to ask of the Government in the name of humanity, and these people are most deserving. They have never cost the Government anything, except for the establishment and maintenance of two schools, one here [Unalaska] and the other at Atka, and these of necessity benefit but a very small percentage of the school population.” Aleuts “have never cost a dollar for soldiers to keep them in order, as have the Indians of the plains; perhaps if they had they would not have been so long neglected. They have never had any continued medical care or treatment; no treatment at all in fact, except what could be given by the surgeons of the revenue cutters in their occasional

flying visits, and yet it is known that they are suffering, not as individuals but as a people, from some of the most dreadful known diseases. They are simply being allowed to rot away because of them.”

Despite his regard for Aleuts, Foley thought “these people are children and need to be taught and controlled, and shown new ways of earning a livelihood. . . . “ To replace hunting and fishing, he suggested they be taught to grow vegetables and raise poultry. Fishing on the open sea would be available to them if they had a schooner. They needed a store where they could get fair prices for the furs. If a coaling station were established at Dutch Harbor (as it would be in a few years), Aleuts could be employed.

“The exploitation of these islands by hunters and traders who go about them in winter in small schooners and sloops is a growing evil which should be abolished,” he concluded. “Some of these hunters are accused, and justly I believe, of poisoning the foxes and bartering whisky with the natives for furs.”

The modified semiunderground house known as a *barabara* was disappearing. Those that continued to be used most frequently had interior floors and walls of lumber supplied or purchased from the A. C. Company or the North American Commercial Company. The use of interior lumber led a visitor to Atka in 1915 to refer to the homes as “frame houses covered by sod; no true Barabaras.”<sup>xxix</sup> In the poorer villages, the use of lumber was more restricted and driftwood, of course, a scarce resource, as noted in a 1915 report.

The natives of the Aleutian Islands do not have enough wood to build themselves frame houses, so their dwellings are made of sod and are called Barabaras. These Barabaras consist of two rooms about six feet square and about six feet high. One room is used as sleeping, eating and living room and usually has wooden floors and one window which cannot be opened. In this room they have a bed, a table and several boxes or

chairs. The air is foul, damp and has a musty odor. The other room has dirt floor, dirt walls and in one end is dug an open fire place in which the family cooking is done. This room is also used as storehouse for dried fish. The entrance to the Barabara is through the latter room.<sup>xxx</sup>

Living conditions varied from village to village, year to year, as small communities were easily susceptible to major changes. Between 1908 and 1920 only one of the villages had a population that reached 50.

	Village Populations <sup>xxxii</sup>					
	1908	1912	1913	1915	1920a	1920b
Biorka	40	40	42	30	39	46
Makushin	48	47	51	44	35	
Kashega	34	36	40	37	48	51
Chernofski	38	45	45	38	21	
Total	160	168	177	149	143	

In 1913, P. A. Carter, surgeon on the *Unalaga*, found Makushin barabaras in poor condition although the ones in “New Makushin” were “larger, higher out of the ground, and better ventilated” than those at “Old Makushin” at Volcano Bay. This report shows that almost 35 years after “abandoning” the village at Volcano Bay, Makushin people continued to maintain summer dwellings there. Those in Kashega “are larger and better ventilated. . . each having two or three windows and dirt floors. The barabaras are fairly well furnished, several having cooking stoves, tables, chairs, and frame bedsteads. The natives keep their homes fairly clean.” Chernofski, however, had the most impressive homes. “The barabaras are fairly large,” he wrote, “each having two holes in the roof for ventilation. The barabaras have wooden floors, glass windows, and are fairly well furnished inside. The natives keep themselves and their homes fairly clean—they all seem to be well clothed and have plenty to eat.”<sup>xxxii</sup>

The most frequent complaints about these homes focused on a lack of ventilation and on their crowdedness. “It will be noticed that tuberculosis is much more prevalent among the female natives which is undoubtedly due to their mode of living,” wrote B. J. Duffy, the assistant surgeon on the *Tahoma*. “The women remain indoors practically all the time nursing the young and making baskets while the men are out fishing and hunting.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> However, a report from 1915 indicated an average of 3.4 residents per dwelling in Biorka, Chernofski, and Kashega. There were 4.9 per dwelling at Makushin.

#### Dwellings and Population in 1915<sup>xxxiv</sup>

	Barabaras	Frame Houses	Population
Biorka	10	0	17 adults 13 children
Chernofski	10	1	19 adults 19 children
Kashega	10	0	18 adults 19 children
Makushin	6	3	27 adults 17 children

Despite the favorable assessment in 1913, Chernofski was clearly impoverished. “As they have no beds,” wrote a surgeon aboard the *Manning* in 1915, “they sleep on dried grass on the floor.”<sup>xxxv</sup> “This appeared to be a poverty-stricken place,” wrote B. L. Reed, captain of the *McCulloch* in 1916. The 30 residents lived in seven barabaras. “The natives had neither flour nor tea, and no ammunition. Fish was the only article of food, and there was little on hand. Their hunting season last winter had been poor. The basket making industry appears to be neglected.” No vessel had visited the village in over 3 months. “The natives were so needy, and their condition appeared to me so pitiful that I issued from the ration supply of the vessel seven sacks of flour, one for each house, or family, in the village. A supply of old clothing, contributed by the men, was also sent ashore for use of the natives.”<sup>xxxvi</sup>

During this same 1916 visit, Captain Reed learned that nine men from Kashega were working for the Pacific American Fisheries which operated a cannery in Makushin

Bay. Kashega Village “appeared prosperous and there was on hand a large supply of salmon.” The cannery did not prove a success and the following year it was taken apart for transfer to Bristol Bay.<sup>xxxvii</sup> In 1917 there were 10 active permits for commercial fishing in the Aleutians, including two for the Pacific American Fisheries (out of South Bellingham, Washington).

The Spanish influenza pandemic struck the eastern Aleutians in 1919. Between May 26 and June 19, there were forty-four deaths at Unalaska Village. Coast Guard medical officers visited outlying communities the summer and fall of 1920. During the preceding year (and it is unclear whether or not the May/June 1919 outbreak fell within this period), Akutan reported 14 deaths, “mostly aged women and children from an epidemic of influenza.” Five people died from influenza at Makushin. Nicholai S. Lekanoff and Andrew Makarin have provided anecdotal information of numerous deaths at Chernofski, Makushin, and Biorka during the epidemic. However, the report of the commanding officer of the U. S. Coast Guard Cutter *Unalga*, stationed at Unalaska during the epidemic, noted on June 9, 1919, that there was “no sickness on any of the islands nor at any other villages to the westward of Unalaska.”<sup>xxxviii</sup> Village church records need to be studied to confirm the number of fatalities.

#### 4. The 1920s and 1930s

When the *Unalaga* visited villages in October and November, 1920, Chernofski was in reduced straits. A small pox epidemic at Unalaska had spread to the village. (At the time this was blamed on Michael Tutiakoff who broke the quarantine imposed at Unalaska when he traveled on the motor launch *Akutan*. However, small pox eruptions appeared the day he arrived suggesting the infection had spread earlier.) There were twenty-two residents at Chernofski. Nineteen had small pox. The medical officer, F. L. Washburn, “found sanitary and general living conditions of these natives poor.” Conditions at Makushin (with 35 residents) and especially at Kashega (with 48) were

better. At Biorka (with 45 residents) people were living in frame dwellings under good conditions.

In 1921, Donald H. Stevenson, reservation and game warden stationed at Unalaska, wrote that establishing reindeer herds on Unalaska would “in time furnish the natives with food and clothing, and those two things seem to be what they mostly require at present. . . . I will add that the two outlying villages of Chernofski and Kashega are poorer and more in need of help than the Unalaska natives, because as a last resort these [Unalaska] people can go to work, while those at the other small villages have to depend upon the natural resources of the country to make their living.”<sup>xxxix</sup>

The 1920s and 1930s were characterized by an increased presence of non-Natives at Kashega and Makushin. All the villages had witnessed outsiders filing various mining and fishing claims in their vicinities during the previous decade. As early as 1904 a “canning, trading, and manufacturing site” had been located at Volcano Bay, near Makushin. These claims, often made by men who were or had been government officials—marshal and custom agent—must have given villagers concern. Although the claims were filed, for the most part, in the years between 1912 and 1919, their economic repercussions were felt in the following decade. Here are a few examples.

On 1 Sept. 1904. A Canning, Trading and Manufacturing site at Volcano Bay and Wislow Bay for H. Ohlemutz, located by his agent John A. McDonald (Miscellaneous Records, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District at Unalaska , page 2)

On 3 January 1912: W. B. Hastings claimed water from the Makushin creek, and James S. Osmund of Astoria, Oregon, claimed land at Volcano Bay.

On 4 January 1912: W. B. Hastings claimed land at Makushin village and at Volcano Bay for a cannery or saltry site. (Miscellaneous Records, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District, page 22) He referred to Volcano Bay as “old Makushin village.” (Page 24)

On 26/27 February 1913: Thomas Snow claimed land at Kashega for a trading and manufacturing site. (Miscellaneous Records, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District at Unalaska, page 35)

On 12 August 1914. O. I. Queen and Vasili Shaishnikoff located a vein or lode of quartz on Burka. (Record Book 1, District Court of Alaska, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, I, No. 79574, page 1)

On 4 October 1915: N. E. Bolshanin nailed a notice for “a cannery or saltery site, not over 20 acres. . . to stake at line of high tide bearing Northeast from Church at New Makushin Village, Unalaska Island, about 80 feet from creek.” (Record 1, District Court of Alaska, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, Book #79574, page 8) He claimed 20 miners inches of water from the Makushin Creek and claimed a cannery or saltery site at head of Makushin Bay “in a due Easterly direction from the new village of Makushin about 10 miles distant, said bay to be known as Bolshanin Cove.” (Record 1, District Court of Alaska, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, Book #79574, page 11)

On 5 April 1916: Bolshanin sold his two cannery and water right locations at Makushin to the Pacific American Fisheries of South Bellingham, Washington, for \$75.00. (Record 1, Dist. Court of AK, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, Book #79574, page 17)

On 19 September 1916 Vacilli Petikoff, Peter Petikoff, Paul Buckley and N. E. Bolshanin located a quartz mining ground, in a westerly direction from the right arm of Anderson Bay, along with 20 miners inches of water from Lucky Strike Creek, on west arm of Anderson Bay. They also located a mill site, in the westerly arm of Anderson Bay, known as the Lucky Strike Mill Site. (Record Book, District Court of Alaska, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, I, No. 79574, pages 25, 26 27)

On 19 April 1919: A. G. Allingham filed a trade and manufacturing claim a half mile from Chernofski Village. (Record Book 79574, page 91)

On 20 August 1926: W. F. Wiggins claimed a trade and fishing site of 20 acres on the westerly shore of Kulliliak Bay. Notice was posted on the abandoned saltery on the westerly shore of the bay. (Miscellaneous Records, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District at Unalaska, page 60)

Legal titles, however, had become important. At Unalaska, fences began to demarcate private property. The Alaska Commercial Company and the Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Church (for the Jesse Lee Home) took steps to protect their extensive properties. Metropolitan Platon of the Orthodox Church received patents in the name of President Woodrow Wilson to churches at Biorka, Makushin, Kashega, Umnak, Chernovski, and Akutan, on July 27, 1914. (Miscellaneous Records, Volume 5) On a paper in the back of the Miscellaneous Records the patent to the Unalaska church was dated December 2, 1916.<sup>xl</sup> As the blue fox industry developed, islands had to be officially leased from the U. S. government prior to stocking them with fox.

Biorka Village alone had the foresight to record its own claim. On March 30, 1918, Jacob Kozloff, chief of Biorka, located a trade and manufacturing site on behalf of the whole village. The site was "in what is known as the old village of BIORKA on Biorka Island." This was in the next bay towards the mouth of Beaver Inlet from the existing village. The intent of the claim was clear: ". . . the specific and particular use for which said land is claimed is for our own fishing business and for using same for salting salmon and codfish, the same is our own old village and for that reason we claim the whole of said village for living and carrying on the fishing business." (Book No. 79574, page 80, October 15, 1914)

A claim for living, for carrying on with their own business—and this is what they did until the outbreak of World War Two. As Henry Swanson remarked, "Biorka had been one of the strongest villages before the war. Unlike Makushin and Kashega where people moved away, at Biorka the people managed to live off the land. Then, too, they



were closer to Unalaska and they could come in here to get things.”<sup>xli</sup> One of the things they came to Unalaska to get was medical attention. In 1917 Eustina Makarin, eventually the stepmother of Irene Makarin, broke her leg at Biorka and was brought to Unalaska. Nicholai Bolshanin was the commissioner and, as he had done for another woman a few months earlier, he placed Eustina in the jail so that she could be cared for by Dr. A. W. Newhall of the Jesse Lee Home. The next day, May 31<sup>st</sup>, he conveniently found her husband, Andrew Makarin, guilty of vagrancy and sentenced him to two months in the same jail.<sup>xlii</sup>

In 1938 the Biorka community filed for a new townsite. This claim described a site “1500 meandering feet along beach of Samgathik Bay on N.E. side of Beaver Inlet—about 2 miles south of present (second) Townsite—extending 800 feet back.” The site was located and dated February 1, 1938, by Chief Alex Ermeloff and witnessed by Andrew Makarin and John A. Yatchmeneff (son of the late Unalaska chief).<sup>xliii</sup> Biorka had no resident white population to push for schools or to establish a commercial firm. One consequence of this was the lack of historical records. Conditions at Kashega and Makushin, however, were more thoroughly documented.

In the fall of 1918 Dr. Andrew C. Smith and William Macintosh of Oregon shipped 500 head of sheep to Dutch Harbor. That September Smith received a four-year contract to deliver mail between Kodiak, Unalaska, and Nushagak. The year before, on August 1, 1917, Smith had located a saltery site, at Chernofski. (Record Book, District Court of Alaska, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, I, No. 79574, page 64 1/2) At the same time Smith and Mackintosh had jointly filed for a trade and manufacturing site along the southwest shore of Chernofski Bay, “distance about one mile south of village of Chernofsky.” (Record Book, District Court of Alaska, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, I, No. 79574, page 88) The summer of 1919 the sheep were divided between Umnak Island and Chernofski harbor. Before long Smith and Macintosh had a falling out, and Smith established the Western Pacific Livestock Company with headquarters at Chernofski. Macintosh formed the Aleutian Livestock Company at Umnak. In 1923 the two companies shipped “one thousand and

two yearling ewes and thirty rams for the Aleutian Livestock Company, and nine hundred and fifteen ewes and twenty rams for the Western Pacific Livestock Company. Also aboard were five horses, four dogs, pigs, chickens, a milk cow, and other livestock.” Weather forced everything to be landed at Chernofski. The Aleutian Livestock Company had also brought along material and goods for a store. According to Stevenson, the store was complete, stocked with “about everything that could be used in a town such as Unalaska.” They had everything “except customers.” “Possibly thirty poverty-stricken natives will comprise the total trade,” he wrote.<sup>xliv</sup> W. R. Sproat worked at Chernofski from 1923 to 1927 and again from 1929 to 1932. He wrote that “there was a native village across the bay, but all had moved to Kashega or Unalaska except two families and they[,] too, moved while I was there.”<sup>xlv</sup> Stevenson commented in 1925 that “one or two of the Chernofski boys have got so they are pretty good men about the sheep. . . .” Nevertheless, as Henry Swanson noted, the sheep ranch did not save the village.

The Western Pacific Livestock Company established a ranch at Kashega. By 1932 both companies were in receivership. The ranch at Kashega was closed and everything was moved to Chernofski under instructions from the receiver.<sup>xlvi</sup> In 1935 Caryle C. Eubank, the receiver for both companies, purchased the Aleutian Livestock Company. The following year the Western Pacific Livestock Company was purchased by the Oregon Worsted Company.

A Bureau of Indian Affairs school opened at Kashega in the fall of 1929 with James and Carrye Henderson as teachers. They remained for three years. The Superintendent for the Southwestern District, George Gardner, had his headquarters at Unalaska. Beginning in 1930, he and his wife, Victoria, published a monthly news bulletin that included items about Kashega.

“There is a very friendly attitude throughout the village toward the school and the work we are trying to do,” wrote James Henderson on September 30. Their efforts were directed toward teaching English, through drills and role playing. He mentioned having

the children draw pictures “of the new church.” On July 31, 1931, Henderson wrote that turnips from the school garden were being enjoyed. The school, its fence and gate had received another coat of green paint. The roof had been repainted red and a school bell had arrived. “The men who were fishing here for red salmon have finished with that fish,” he wrote. “They’ll attend to the humps next and the silvers after that.” On November 16 he wrote, “The health of the community is very good. The native men are preparing to trap, of course, most of them on this island.” In January 1932, the bulletin reported Kashega had enjoyed a Christmas play. “There is no sickness in the village of an acute nature,” wrote Henderson, “and the weather for the past few days has been extremely beautiful with the thermometer below freezing but the days are calm and sunny and the night skys full of stars and a waning moon. The hills are covered with snow; the lakes with ice. . . . The men have been very lucky with their trapping for the most part and are now coming home for their church festivities.”

The *Southwestern District News Bulletin* published several letters by Kashega students.<sup>xlvii</sup>

We are learning fast at school. I will be glad when my father is working in St. Paul Island. . . . We have Honor Roll on the blackboard. . . . My grandfather says hello to you. My grandfathers says you are nice people. . . . Lot blackberries at Kashega. My grandmother is go to picnic yesterday. sometime I go with him. . . . I like to eat blackberries [moss berries, *Empetrum nigrum*] and salmon berries. Lot of silver salmon at Kashega. . . . I have four books in my desk. . . . [Martha Denisoff, September 9, 1931]

We are getting along nicely at school. . . . The Revenue Cutter “Itasca” was here September 7<sup>th</sup>, that time we have no school because library day. . . . I am very glad because I heard everybody is well at Unalaska. I heard my uncle and his wife and her childs are at Unalaska. I never live in this village but I came here to see my mother sister with my

mother two brothers and one sister. . . . We live in Nikolski village. . . .  
[Nellie E. Chercasen, September 10, 1931]

We are learning many things at school. . . . Kashega is a cleanest  
village in Alaska. We keep Kashega clean all the time. . . . All the  
Kashega children have gardens. Our gardens are round like a circle. . . .  
Perhaps, June 15<sup>th</sup> will be soon enough to plant turnips, lettuce, carrots and  
radishes. . . . [Doria Borenen, October 23, 1931]

In Kashega the man and woman are working at Kashega. We have  
12 children at Kashega school and 11 house and 31 men. . . . The girls are  
making a dress and towel and sewing a dress and towel and the boys are  
build a shipe. . . . I will stay at Kashega all winter. I thing so. . . . The  
Umnak school we have 25 children at Umnak School; I am come from  
Umnak. When I am 25 years old I will come to Unalaska. I am 10 years  
old. How old are you. We will keep Kashega clean. We will not stend  
the cans around the houses and the duck fether and the old boots and  
shoes. . . .

[Jacob Cheercasen, no date but published in November 1931]

We have rainy weather at Kashega. We are all right at Kashega.  
Yesterday we have nice weather but today we have windy and rainy  
weather. . . . In the morning after reading we have spelling and arithmetic.  
After recess we have talking English we have forests. It is good thing to  
learn about forests more and more. . . . We have no trees at Kashega. . . .  
[Martha Dennisoff, February 11, 1932]

The Juneau office awarded Mike Kudrin, one of the older students, the  
Forestry Essay Contest for his division. On March 5, 1932, Mike married Doria  
Borenin at the Church of the Holy Ascension in Unalaska.

Arletta Carter replaced the Hendersons on September 18, 1932. Among her students was Eva Kudrin, one of this project's principal consultants. Eva was four years old and was given "busy work only" because she was "too young for school work." She was withdrawn after 38 days. Carter's narrative report for the spring of 1933 is optimistic and in stark contrast to her later evaluations.

Kashega is a quaint, picturesque little village on the Bering Sea side of Unalaska Island, Aleutian Islands. It is surrounded by snow-capped mountains, low, grass-covered hills, lakes and streams and the sea. Kashega's climate is mild, for we live in Alaska's 'banana belt' . . .

Kashega's church is Russian Greek Catholic. Bishop Antonin, with headquarters in Unalaska, makes frequent visits to the village. I am aware that there is considerable adverse criticism of the Russian Church. Nevertheless, basing my judgement on observations made at Kashega, I believe they do a good work among the Natives, —bringing them a certain culture, refinement and moral influence, a simple faith in God and the Bible, a spirit of hope, of peace and contentment which is commendable. In my opinion it is wise for the church and school to cooperate in their efforts for effective community work.

The Kashega School was founded in 1928 by Dr. Andrew C. Smith of Portland, Oregon. He continues to show an active interest. At Christmastime we received surprise packages containing a forty-eight pound can of delicious candy, pretty holiday cards, and attractive presents. To express our appreciation for all his kindnesses, we wrote letters to Dr. Smith and inclosed a booklet containing some of our art work.

Our school studies stress the practical subjects which will have a "carry over" value throughout life—reading, writing, arithmetic, manual training, domestic arts, music, art, recreation, health and physical education. We learn the value of American currency, how to count and make change. . . . We needed a new stove, so instead of a heater, we

requisitioned a cook stove which gives twofold service,—heat for the room and for cooking classes. . . .

She detailed other projects: making rag dolls and doll dresses, quilts, bean-bags, doll houses and furniture. They children learned songs, accompanied at times by a ukelele or harmonica.. The school had a garden with radishes, lettuce carrots, turnips and potatoes.

Kashega has a Native population of twenty-nine, who are almost 100% full-blooded Aleut. In their natural state they are a peaceful, home-loving people. There is a splendid community spirit at Kashega. In the autumn the village men were busy constructing a new bath house. They now have an excellent “steam bath”. All the families contributed money for purchasing the new village pump. Lake water has been used in the past, but we believe well water will be much purer. Seats in the schoolroom were removed from their stationary places and fastened to narrow boards. Now the seats may be pushed aside for play on rainy days, or for games and dancing at the community meetings in the evenings. When the new victrola arrives we will have some very good music. The teacher tries to “remember the influence of example”. In her community work she emphasizes health and physical education, personal hygiene, sanitation, the importance of wholesome food, recreation in the sunshine and fresh air, work, economy, thrift, and does endless little services which help to make living conditions in the village more pleasant and enjoyable.

Commander Roach, U. S. S. Shoshone, Coast Guard, is especially interested in the social problems of the Alaska Natives. While talking with him, he made the following statement: “Make them self-supporting and self-respecting; and to be self-respecting, they must be self-supporting”. Kashega Natives are self-supporting. Their legal sources of income are: baskets, furs (red and cross foxes), fish (cod and salmon), and

remunerative employment by the Government on St. Paul Island. One of the biggest community problems, however, is protecting their income from these “rascally traders” and commercial companies who deliberately, regardless of the methods used,—propagate schemes of exploitation for personal and commercial profit. In this problem, as in all work, I find it helpful to keep in mind the quotation from Marshall Field, who said, “REMEMBER—the success of perseverance”.<sup>xlviii</sup>

“Kashega Notes” published in the Seward Gateway occasionally carried news excerpted from school reports sent to or written by the Gardners.<sup>xlix</sup>

Kashega is rapidly developing into a prosperous trading center. The bottling business which Harry Jacobsen began in a small way when he first moved to Kashega, has developed into quite a flourishing enterprise. This winter he has employed an assistant, Alex Lake, who is a specialist in that line. Numerous trading vessels come into the harbor bringing raw products in the form of salt, barrels, sugar, malt, and so forth; and take on exports such as fur, wool, salt codfish, mutton, bottled soft-beverages, and fine baskets woven by the native women. [April 26, 1933]

Harry Jacobsen owned and operated the store at Kashega. According to Henry Swanson, Jacobsen was a Norwegian fisherman who had worked in mines at Spitsbergen as a young man and had been “the boss at one of the codfish stations near Chernofski.” Arletta Carter wrote that he had lived in the village since 1919. He was listed as a resident of Akutan in a petition that community filed in November 1919 for the establishment of a school.<sup>1</sup> Eva Tcheripanoff recalled his store being well-stocked with shoes and rain-gear. Jacobsen was the caretaker for the Western Pacific Livestock Company during the winter of 1932-1933. He used their barn where “several of the

natives are employed building a new motor boat.” He purchased lumber to build a saltery at Raven Bay. He and John Rankin hoped to operate a gold mine in the Kashega area.<sup>li</sup>

Carter did not persevere for long. She left Kashega several times, making trips to Unalaska, Seward, and eventually (in February 1934) to Seattle for dental treatment. By the end of her stay she had become disillusioned. Her report dated September 8, 1933, concluded, “The future of Kashega will be one of drinking, debauchery, disease and death. . . . Government money spent at Kashega is money wasted.”<sup>lii</sup> She blamed Jacobsen, calling him a “lazy drunkard” and “unprincipled” who “has a combination store and living quarters where he and his ‘Gang’ cooperate in running what corresponds to an old time saloon, gambling den and red-light house, - a rendezvous for ‘Hoodlums’.” She declared the villagers, men and women, “habitual drunkards.”

In January 1933 she had traveled to Unalaska aboard the *Einar Beyer* to consult with the U. S. commissioner and deputy marshal. “Just what business brought her in we do not know,” wrote A. H. Proctor, agent for the Alaska Commercial Company, “but it is pretty definitely understood it was in reference to what she considered as excessive drinking by the natives and others at Kashega since the holidays started.” Proctor attempted to get information about the number of fox pelts taken at the village. “She claimed to have no definite knowledge. . . .” but thought the catch was large and that it had been sold to the *Dorthea* and the *Einar Beyer*. “It is understood on good authority that Miss Carter said she believed Harry Jacobsen had secured a good many [pelts] in exchange with what she believed to be liquor.” Carter led Proctor to understand that Jacobsen regularly sent deposits to a bank in Bremerton where “he has quite a nest-egg laid aside. . . .”<sup>liii</sup>

The population in September 1933 was 17 adults and 10 children. This, Carter wrote, was a decrease from 38 in 1928. Only four children attended school regularly; and only two of those, she said, were worth her time. Carter’s report must be questioned. Among the “children” listed in her census was Mike Kudrin, aged 18, who already had



been married a year. Peter Kudrin, also listed as a child, was three years older than Mike. Nevertheless, her report was accepted and in 1934 she received a telegram instructing her to close the school on June 30. She was to visit Makushin and ascertain the possibility of getting a building to use as a school rent free. Carter was transferred to Tanana, leaving in her wake checks totaling over \$500 returned by the bank for insufficient funds.<sup>liv</sup>

Following a visit of only a few hours at Makushin, Carter wrote, “I would rather teach at Makushin, in the barn temporarily (if need be), than waste time in fruitless effort at Kashega.” She credited Pete Olsen at Makushin with having “one of the finest little villages in the Aleutian Islands. . . . a progressive village where the trader stands for decency of conduct among the Natives.”

Order, yes, but at what cost? “The man did good for the village,” said Henry Swanson about Olsen, “but he also did a lot of bad. He was known to have a bad character and to be awful mean.”<sup>lv</sup> “I have heard that ‘Pete Olsen would just as soon shoot you as look at you,’” wrote Arletta Carter. “There are . . . stories circulating that Pete Olsen is cruel to his Natives; that he beats them and abuses them.” He was suspected in the death of a girl who “fell” off a bluff near the village, but he proved he had been “two miles away reading a book.” Carter found that Olsen had “reformed remarkably”, was “thrifty and enterprising”, and “progressive.”

Carter’s description of Makushin Village corresponds to a photograph taken in 1932 for which Nicholai S. Lekanoff provided building identifications. Carter reported that Olsen

1. Has a cozy home with modern equipment, — electric lights, electric stove, bath tub and toilet, radio and piano.
2. Has a charming, cultured Native wife, and two worthy adopted children, — Annie 15 years and Johnny 7 years.<sup>lvi</sup> The entire family are English speaking.

3. Has a power house in the hills where he generates electricity for use in the homes and for a chain of lights built along the walk by the sea.

4. Has a neat store well equipped with necessary food supplies, clothing and household articles.

5. Has a solid gravel walk to the rear and front of the row of Native houses which face the sea. Mr. Olsen demands that the beach and grounds be kept immaculate, and, to facilitate this order, he has provided individual covered garbage holes at the rear of each house. The houses are painted outside, and are clean and comfortable inside.

6. Has a swing at the beach where the children may swing at leisure and enjoy the music of the waves.

7. Has a flag pole at the beach, and patriotically hoists the American flag whenever a ship or boat comes into the harbor

8. Has a herd of sheep which provide fresh meat for the village.

9. Has community gardens which provide fresh vegetables.

10. Has a flock of chickens which provide fresh eggs.

In addition, she noted that the village itself:

1. Has a small Russian Greek Catholic church.

2. Has a fine harbor and bay. The surrounding mountains are snow-capped, and the scenery is beautiful.

3. Has climate which is milder; vegetation was much farther advanced at Makushin this spring than elsewhere on Unalaska Island.

4. Is near radio and hospital service in the towns of Unalaska and Dutch Harbor which, in case of accident or illness, may be reached within a few hours either by boat or by the trail over the mountains.

5. Has a Native school population of fourteen.

The Makushin population, in Carter’s list, had 18 children between two and fifteen years of age. There were 3 between nineteen and twenty-one. She estimated there were between 25 or 30 adults. The village, she concluded, “has innumerable future possibilities.”

And so, what happened? Carter’s evaluation was made in September 1933. Three years later Kashega’s population had grown from 27 to 43. (This figure seems high. A report in July 1940 gave the population as 26, 13 men and 13 women.<sup>lvii</sup>) Makushin’s, on the other hand, had dropped from close to 50 down to 11. The recollections of Unangan elders like Nicholai S. Lekanoff and Nicholai Galaktionoff make clear that Carter reported only the white-washed surface of conditions at Makushin. The presence of Pete Olsen created a situation that undercut village survival. Men who might have led the community were either dead or driven away to Unalaska. Perhaps, if the war had not intervened and if Olsen had left Makushin, the village might have reasserted itself as both Kashega and Biorka proved capable of doing.

Population in 1936<sup>lviii</sup>

	Native	White	Total	Commercial Establishments
Biorka	16		16	
Chernofski	1*	3	4	Sheep ranch
Kashega	43		43	
Makushin	10	1	11	General store
Unalaska	180	43	233	
(Dutch Harbor)		7	7	

\* Note that the village had been abandoned. The Aleut was employed by the sheep ranch.

By 1937 Makushin was in reduced straits. Details found in excerpts from two reports by Coast Guard cutter officials supplement the accounts given in the oral histories. The first is from Lieutenant C. F. Edge of the Coast Guard Cutter *Spencer*. In it he summarizes information supplied by Jack O'Conner, an officer of the Alaska Game Commission. He suggested that Olsen be kept under observation "with a view of ending his reputedly illegal activities, or of bringing him to justice."

John Peter Halberg Olsen, a Russian Finn, entered this country in 1904. He resides at Makushin, on Unalaska Island, and applied for his first papers at Seward during the current year; application number S568-69036. He is married to a native or part native woman, and it is believed that she has been married to him long enough so that she is no longer entitled to claim citizenship. He owns a herd of sheep, a trading store, an electric plant from which he sells current to other persons, and operates a boat which he states belongs to a cannery, but which his wife states belongs to him but is in her name. He is supposed to have illegal interests in fox raising rights on Ogliuga and Skagul Islands. It is stated that natives are leaving the vicinity of Makushin because they are being driven off by Olsen. He was recently convicted of illegal possession of firearms, the Collector of Customs at Dutch Harbor, Mr. Durrell Finch, acting as attorney in his defense. His fine is believed to have been paid by the agent of the Alaska Commercial Company at Dutch Harbor. Prior to his trial, three natives, two of whom were to have appeared against him at his trial, were reported missing in a small boat. Olsen is said to have gone out to look for them, and on his return reported that he had found the remains of their boat, showing evidence of having been attacked and crushed by a walrus. Other persons reported subsequently that they had discovered the boat, stove in, and with a rifle bullet hole through the side.<sup>lix</sup>

Henry Swanson's comments on this event are relevant. He said the Aleut men had "just got around a pinnacle point—a kind of Priest Rock—going towards Volcano Bay. Olsen was up on the hill above them. In those days they had lights up on the hills for markers. There was one at Makushin for the mailboats and one at Chernofski and Umnak. These were coal-oil or kerosene lamps, and once every couple of weeks someone from the village would have to go and refill them. The wick might need trimming or the chimney need cleaning. Well, Pete Olsen was up on the hill where this light was and he said he saw what happened. All those fellows disappeared. They never did find their bodies. Pete Olsen said they were attacked by a bunch of walruses!"<sup>lx</sup>

A brief sentence in a report from Nobel G. Ricketts, commanding the Coast Guard Cutter *Tallapoosa*, dates the removal of a dozen residents. He arrived at Makushin on July 20, 1937 at 5:45 in the afternoon. Olsen himself had left the village on a trip to the States and his wife, Tatianna, was in charge.<sup>lxi</sup> The next morning, about 7:45, "Left Makushin, having received aboard 12 destitute native women and children with their belongings for transportation to Unalaska." The *Tallapoosa* moored at Dutch Harbor at 1:30 in the afternoon. The Makushin people were taken ashore in a launch with Makarii Zaochney (1883 – 1938) of Atka who had been working as a guide for Ales Hrdlicka.<sup>lxii</sup> Rickett's unpublished diary notes that he removed two widows and their children. A third widow remained behind with relatives. According to Ricketts, all three women had lost their husbands on April 23 when they went fishing on a fine day. Among the children brought to Unalaska on this trip was twelve year-old Nicholai Galaktionoff.

The Makushin families arrived to find a "General store, Restaurants, Beer parlors, Liquor stores, Cinema, docks, [and an] Oil station." The public offices and officials included a "Post office, U. S. Commissioner, Deputy U. S. Marshal, U. S. School, U. S. Hospital, Coast Guard Station, [and a] U. S. Navy Radio Station."<sup>lxiii</sup> Confronted by a

community radically different from their home village, Nicholai S. Lekanoff and Nicholai Galaktionoff would soon witness even greater changes. By 1940 the U. S. Navy had purchased the property formerly owned by the North American Commercial Company on Amaknak Island (within Unalaska Bay). They took ownership of all public domain lands and by August base construction had begun. Eva Tcheripanoff at Kashega and Irene Makarin at Biorka would, no doubt, have heard about the happenings at Unalaska.

In July 1940 Lieutenant E. S. Endom of the U. S. Coast Guard Cutter *Shoshone* reported Makushin had nine “regular” Aleut residents, 4 men and 5 women, in addition to Olsen. Three of the men were working in the Pribilof Islands. The village was visited monthly by the *Fern*, bringing mail and supplies and picking up any furs for sale at Unalaska. This village, he concluded, “is inhabited only during the summer.” This last statement, while not accurate, reflects a severely weakened village. A letter from Olsen to L. Verne Robinson, the deputy U. S. marshal at Unalaska, dated April 7, 1941, mentions having just had a fine winter at Makushin. He had even dug post holes in January and February and gathered driftwood for his winter sheep pasture. He was writing to ask Robinson to protect his house at Unalaska (which he had purchased from John Olgin) from vandalism by children. In this letter and in one dated October 23, 1940, he gives a picture of feuds between himself and a number of Caucasian and Native men that had been going on for over ten years.<sup>lxiv</sup>

According to Henry Swanson, Olsen left Makushin at the time of the evacuation and moved to Southeastern Alaska. His boat, the *Katie-O*, was left at the cannery site in Makushin Bay. “It went to pieces right at the dock,” Henry said. “I saw it after the war. The engine was sitting right on the beach. That’s where it lay. Someone must have used it—perhaps the military—because it was moved out of the lagoon where he used to keep it for the winter.”

## Conclusions

The following oral histories provide a host of details about life in Makushin, Kashega, and Biorka as remembered by people who were children at the time. It was naturally difficult for the consultants to pinpoint dates of events more than 50 to 70 years in the past. There are contradictions among the accounts and occasionally there are obvious errors. The value of these recollections, however, is not in the verifiability of details often provable from other sources. These oral histories give us rare portraits of three small Unangan communities, each with its own strengths and weaknesses, at the arrival of the Second World War on the American continent. The histories also bear witness to the accomplishments, courage, humor, and resiliency of four remarkable elders and of those who came before them.

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### NOTES

NARA = National Archives and Records Administration. RG = Record Group

<sup>i</sup> Nick Galaktionoff. *Cuttlefish Two: Four Villages*. Unalaska City School District. 1978:22

<sup>ii</sup> Nick frequently referred to 1939 as the year he moved from Makushin. However, records of the U. S. Coast Guard suggest the date was July 1937. The Unalaska Public School annual report for the year ending May 19, 1939, records him attending school for 137 ½ days. No earlier reports have been located.

<sup>iii</sup> Henry Swanson. *The Unknown Islands. Cuttlefish VI*. Unalaska City School District. 1978:53

<sup>iv</sup> Library of Congress. Russian Church Collection. D-115. The list of chapels includes St. Nicholas (Biorka), Epiphany (Chernofski), and Transfiguration (Kashega). D-48 has a folder on the church at Makushin dedicated to St. Gregory, however most evidence is that the Makushin church was dedicated to the Nativity of Christ. (Specifically, according to Nicholai S. Lekanoff, to the second day of Christmas when Mary, Joseph and the infant Christ moved from the stable into a cave.)

<sup>v</sup> Library of Congress. Russian Church Collection. D-49. Folder: Alaska Commercial Company, 1891-1892. Letter August 21, 1891, signed by 124 village residents.

<sup>vi</sup> *Journals of the Priest Ioann Veniaminov in Alaska, 1823 to 1836*. Translated by Jerome Kisslinger. University of Alaska Press. Fairbanks. 1993:35, note 2

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- vii Ivan Petroff. *Population and Resources of Alaska*. 46<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session. Executive Document No. 40. 1880: 21
- viii Henry W. Elliott. *Our Arctic Province*. Charles Scribner's Sons. New York. 1886:177
- ix Robert Fortune. *Chills and Fever: Health and Disease in the Early History of Alaska*. University of Alaska Press. Fairbanks, 1992: 203
- x *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska at the Eleventh Census: 1890*. 52d Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session. House Misc. Document 340, Part 7. Serial 3020. Page 88
- xi Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks.
- xii J. P. Maclear. *Sailing Directions for the Bering Sea and Alaska, including the North-East Coast of Siberia*. London, Printed for the Hydrographic office, Admiralty, by Eyre and Spottiswoode, printers to the Queen, 1898: 237
- xiii Ivan Petroff. *Population and Resources of Alaska*. 46<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session. Executive Document No. 40. 1880:20
- xiv Hinckley, Theodore C. and Caryl. "Ivan Petroff's Journal of a Trip to Alaska in 1878." *Journal of the West*. 5(2): 25-70. 1966:26 This description may owe details to Henry W. Elliott. There are numerous parallel passages between Petroff and Elliott.
- xv *Nature*, November 14, 1878
- xvi Hinckley, Theodore C. and Caryl. "Ivan Petroff's Journal of a Trip to Alaska in 1878." 1966:33
- xvii Ivan Petroff, "The Limit of the Innuite Tribes on the Alaska Coast," *The American Naturalist*. Vol. XVI, No. 7, July 1882:572-573
- xviii Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks
- xix Figures for Kashega and Chernofski come from an August 19, 1889, letter in the A. C. Company Copy Book
- xx Samuel Applegate, in *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska at the Eleventh Census: 1890*. 52d Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session. House Misc. Document 340, Part 7. Serial 3020. Page 89
- xxi U. S. Revenue Cutter *Manning*, October 9, 1911. NARA. Record Group 16, File 611, Box 1835.
- xxii Henry Swanson. *The Unknown Islands*. 1982:29-33
- xxiii National Archives. NARA. RG 26, File 611, Box 1835. Captain Foley to the Secretary of the Treasury, August 10, 1911 and September 16, 1911.
- xxiv Alexander Wetmore, "Mammal Report, July 12 – 10, August 17 – 14, 1911" Smithsonian Institution Archives, RU 7176, Box 20, Folder 25























































































































































































RH: Ah, this one says Mike Borenin, ah, Innokentii Borenin and then Mike Borenin. And Mike Borenin, it says, Mike Borenin has two sons, Sergie and John.

NG: Yeah, yeah.

RH: And John lives at Attu with the chief. That would be with Michael, Mike Hodikoff, I guess.

NG: Yeah, Mike Borenin used to be here. Lived down there next to that Lekanoff Jr. place. He passing there. Right over by creek bank. Mike Borenin, I don't know when he come here, but he was here when I come. He died way after that. Yeah, I knew the guy named Mike Lukanin that's from Attu, related to Peter Lukanin from Biorka.

RH: Okay. And Peter's the one who married your sister, Molly.

NG: Yeah. That's why she hung around with my wife because she know that Peter Lukanin's sister. Because she was Lukanin and afterwards got adopted by Ermeloff. I had to ask him to get married to her. I like that girl. I got about over 100 girls that time. That's why I make one extra girl. That was not my wife, but my girlfriend.

RH: Okay. [Laughs]

NG: St. George.

RH: Back to Akutan and the whalers. How did people go, What did people do when they went whaling? How did they hunt whales?

NG: Well, not Attu people, but—

RH: But Akutan.

NG: Akutan is, ah, they got big boats, whale hunting there. They bring a whale there, six at a time. Used to be anchored right outside of Makushin Bay, with the whales floating, when they got enough, three on each side, tow them right to Akutan.

RH: Oh, this is when they had the whaling plant over there.

NG: Oh, yeah, yeah. In Akutan. Yeah. So they start butchering, Akutan people start butchering 'em, and they go through all different ways, cooked that fat different, cook the meat different.

RH: But I was thinking more, Nick, more about the long-time-ago people.

NG: Yeah, long-time-ago people just use their baidarkies, that's all. But pretty hard in the beginning of the baidarkies. No drift wood on the beach. After building one baidarky, one baidarky traveling around, one-man baidarky, he gets some little wood,

loads his boat up and brings it in here, gives it to his chief. If he makes enough, I think, chief give it to somebody, make baidarky out of it. Finally started making two men baidarkies. Two men baidarky go a long ways, get more woods. Bring it to them, bring it into town, village, and start making three men baidarkies. The three men baidarky, the chief used to be taken to other village for a meeting. That's the same way when the Russians come up here, priest would be in three men baidarky, take him to different village. Some places it's pretty hard to come to a village. They don't believe in God. They don't believe what the bishop, priest says to them. He don't understand him, but these Unalaska people understand him. So let them explain, you know, let them know, just read a Bible to them, and bless them with holy water, make them Christians out of them. They let them do that. Them Aleuts say, "*Wan tag^agin!*" It means, "I'm going to try!" [laughs] They don't trust. [*tag^a-lix* means to try, test, or check something.] After that, name 'em and bless 'em, and use holy water on 'em, let 'em kiss the Bible and cross. They'd turn around and ask, those Aleuts, "*Alqut maludg/umchulix?*" He wants to know why he kissed the cross and Bible. "I'm pretty sure you're going to find out about it." That's what the Russians told him. And from there, they're Christians all the way. They want to stay together. And from there they found out where the families stayed. So, they'd send a baidarky there to get them and put them in a baidarky and bring them to the same village to be made a Christians. That Wislow was pretty hard. That's the only one that was pretty hard for the priest. Whale hunting, trying to sink baidarky, using harpoons, almost did it once and finally Christians from here stopped. They talked to them. "They're just want to make a Christians out of you guys."

RH: These would be the Four Mountain people or, ah, further west?

NG: No, Wislow.

RH: Ah, Wislow.

NG: That Four Mountains, he takes a long time to come to Christians, too. He don't believe a god. He never see God in his life, anyway. But the old timers used to have a pole at the end of his house, in the camp, always talk to them before he go out hunting. When he come in to the beach and bring something, he'd land in his place, his camp, take some stuff he find off the beach, take it up to that post. "*Wayam haqaasax^nkin.*" He'd hold that post for awhile, give me that thing by himself. Leave it by himself. Because he

told him, “I bring this to you.” “*Haqasukin.*” “Oh, we’re running it for the chief, or the big boss.” Because in the Aleut, they knew this chief, but people never think about a god. The Russian made it.

And a one, after that one guy hide away and disappear in Wislow. Never did find him until after Christians. That guy starving, got to come out. When he come out of his—he got a name, already named—he going to bless him, bless him and name him, and this guy run away. He was, I understand his last name was John Sherebernikoff. I asked Sophie one time if this was her grandfather! [Laughs] He didn’t know it either. Finally, he come to a Christian. After Christian come out everything start good. That’s why that Bible had been, story, built John Veniaminov and Innokentii something. Because he looked at the people; they don’t live right. But he want to live right, that’s why he make a note, stories in the Bible.

RH: I know Veniaminov spoke very highly about Aleuts. He said they were excellent people, good Christians.

NG: Yeah, that’s the one that be there.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Yep.

RH: Now, who did you hear the story about the Russians fighting here.

NG: That was from that Shelikoff.

RH: Luke Shelikoff? [This was, I think, a wrong assumption on my part although Nick repeatedly referred to Luke Shelikoff. Luke Shelikoff was the last chief of Akutan. He was a noted story-teller. Luke’s father was Kyril Shelikoff. The 1900 census gives his birth date as February 26, 1874, which would have made him 73 in the summer of 1947. Luke Shelikoff would have been only about 40 years old and Nick states below that the story teller was about 80.]

NG: Um-hmm. We used to give him ten dollars a night. Not every Saturday, because we didn’t work Saturdays and Sundays.

RH: In the Pribilofs?

NG: Um—hmm. He was there, last time he was there, 1940—‘47. That time he was 80-some years old. He said he heard those stories from other old people. Those other old people told me they got them from the other old people to the beginning of the Aleuts.

Those really old people they didn't know. He wanted to tell stories, tell other people, younger people, keep 'em going. So that's what I'm trying to do, but gee, I don't know. But I teach a lot of people.

RH: Yeah, you did, you have. Yeah.

NG: I teach a lot of people that story I hear before. That's a good story, them Four Mountains, started, Russians coming all the way in. Start coming visit. Still watching Atka but he finally find out boat come in from—Russian boat come in from Atka and Attu, plain Attu and Atka. That's why that Atka got different language, different dialects. That comes from brother and sister, small, been hide away from the Russians people taking people, drown them and killed them. Shoot some of it. Two or twenty thousand Aleuts, they took three hundred of them out of there. One Russian I talked to said pretty close to 400 Aleuts there in Russia now, kids—

RH: In the Commander Islands, yeah.

NG: We stayed in that Petropavlovsk. That Russians Second World War Two is pretty hard there in Russian, still starvation. And I think to eat, Russian give them one cabbage a day for three-days' supply. Cut it four places, pieces, and cook it and boil it, eat it with a soup, piece of cabbage. Got nothing to eat; they don't give away. It's not like American, you know, give some food away for people. They don't do that there. Still do that, anyway, but there's a store there. You can't buy two at a time, got to buy one thing, that's all. Goddamned big bottles of goddamned pop. Goddamned, that one girl was with us from Anchorage, she can't even carry the bottle. I have to carry it for her, goddamned heavy. . . .

RH: How long were you over there?

NG: Ten days.

RH: Ten days.

NG: Goddamned, I loose ten pounds.

RH: [Laughs]

NG: When I left, 170 pounds, 73 pounds. When I come in I try myself, 160 pounds. That girl coming this way asked, "How much hamburger are you going to buy?" She wanted to get a dozen hamburger pieces.

RH: I want to ask you a different question about, ah, about Makushin. Why don't you think people tried to resettle Makushin after the war? After the war they went to Biorka and to Kashega. But they—

NG: Well, they don't mean to. They don't mean to leave Makushin. They don't mean to leave Kashega. But Chernofski was empty before the war.

RH: Right.

NG: Sickness going on. They were only left with Korella Borenin, Innokentii Borenin, and Sophie [Pletnikoff]. I think five people left when they moved into Kashega. My step-dad, Innokentii Borenin, he said he remembered all that sickness that time, 19—, nineteen-hundred something year. People dying off. That's what he told me that.

RH: And your step-dad, Innokentii Borenin, moved to Kashega?

NG: Um-hmm. From Chernofski. That Kashega people go there again and burn the church-house. They got a small church. They burned it up. Took some old pictures out of it. Goddamn, that a goddamned good place, that Chernofsi. That's the only place the army built a dock, there. And a big warehouse, end of the shore-side of the dock.

RH: They used it to take supplies over to Umnak.

NG: Uh huh. In that cove. That's where we used to take a horse, from the horse and wagon, from that sheep ranch side to go around inside the bay and load our wagon up with that coal, take it into the village. They were using it for firewood. For steam-bath, not steam-bath, but shower. They got it goddamned good there in Chernofski. . . .

RH: . . . . Nick, I don't want to keep you talking too long.

NG: That's okay.

RH: Is it okay? I mean, I don't want to wear you out. [Laughs]

NG: I'm not doing nothing anyway.

RH: Okay. Good. After, let's see, after the war, you went back to, you came to Unalaska after the war?

NG: Um-hmm. Because I'm from here.

RH: Right, right.

NG: But the boat bringing us stopped in Akutan first.

RH: Okay. And did, where did the Biorka people, did they get off at Akutan or—











they used to use, some Biorka people used, some of 'em, used. Goddamned people, used to be heavy pack, take it over the trail all the way. Used to be pick some from up there in the valley, going up. Looked like real putchkies but it's not real putchkies.

RH: Oh.

NG: The roots is pretty big but about this long. Pretty thick.

RH: A strong putchkie. [*Angelica lucida* L.]

NG: Un-huh.

RH: Yeah. Bitter.

NG: That's what people are using in the steam bath. And you can't touch the skin with it because that milk come out of it. Got thin grass over your skin and put it right on, keep it really warm. I know they used it, the front of me. I know a lot of medicine to be used before but I can't tell people. I don't know how to fix it. Anybody use it, get in trouble and I get in trouble.

[CD 1 ends here and CD 2 begins in mid-sentence.]

NG: . . . boil them and after you boil them drink it like tea, drink one cup.

RH: Now, what do you, what do you boil?

NG: Them stuff. I don't know the name of it.

RH: Oh, yeah.

NG: That's why I was going to— people they didn't know it. I was going to pick some for little Sophie down there, some time got sore breathe—

RH: I know Jennie Krukoff used to pick, ah, ah, oh, I can't say it in Aleut.

[mispronounces] *ulngig^dagan* or something It's yarrow. It's a very fuzzy, hairy, little plant. It smells really good when you rub it, when you break it up in your hand.

NG: Yeah, I think I know them. I'm not sure though.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: Them plants I'm talking about are about this long.

RH: Ah. About 2 inches. [I think Nick was referring to *Leptarrhena pyrolifolia*, Leather-Leaved saxifrage – *alix^siisix^*.]

NG: Just like airport kite. Grow right in the small creeks, edge of the small creeks. You can keep them, they live all winter long. So, I know my sister used to pick it. 'cause my sister got one lung. She used to take it. She told me, "You going to cook your whiskey

again!” [Laughs] Laugh at me. People used to make a tea. Long time ago tea called kipriyan [fireweed, *Epilobium angustifolium*] That’s a good tea.

RH: How did you move from Makushin over here? How did you get, you didn’t walk over. You must have come by boat.

NG: I did before, I walked, but the Coast Guard bring us here. I’ve been through there one time.

RH: Through the pass there, yeah. It’s a long pass.

NG: Four hours walking. Could be faster but we didn’t know which way to turn. This side, okay, but other end—

RH: Ah.

NG: —you got to turn to the village. Me and my brother, my brother’s not big, but we used to go through it. Anyway, it’s got a name. The name of that place is Portage Bay and Anderson Bay. I was there. Dug on the beach for awhile, no cabin. People used to use tent anyway. Long ways Makushin way, from there on the beach. One climb hill, one hill, climb it over, from there you got to walk sand all the way. Below that volcano?

RH: Yeah.

NG: Goddamn, a lot of hot spring water there. That’s the one people used to get kids get some water from there, five galleon. Bring it to me. They’d use it on me ‘cause I got sore all over. My hair, can’t heal up. I’d have to wash my face from it.

RH: This is when you were living in Makushin?

NG: Um hmm. I used to, I was a kid anyway, goddamned crawled on the goddamned ground, hide away. Play hide out, other guy looking for us. Sometime looking for half a day. Called him *Kuukalax*^ in Aleut. *Kuukalax*^. Funny them Aleuts named things anyway before. Yeah, the way before people living different people before Russian Orthodox now. Yeah, people pretty tough living. But happy for them could be tough for us if we didn’t know it.

RH: Yeah

NG: We didn’t know it. People living on ducks, seals. Summer come, they live vegetables grow. Did you try pickled salmon—pickled putchkies?

RH: No. No.

NG: I tried some last time. Goddamned, it was good.

RH: Was it? Yeah?

NG: First time, too. One lady and one guy, one Aleut guy, lady. I told them to go Eider Point because Eider Point putchkey long before it gets stiff. They give me jar of it once. I tried once, but I finished it all! [Laughs] It was good. I like it. I told them people use it for vegetables. Petruskies. Same kind petruskies in Russian. Putschkies. I don't know if they got salmon berries, but blueberries. Different shape, though. Ours are round. Those Russian blueberries from Russia look like little candy, those bent ones.

RH: Oh, yeah.

NG: Same kind. Make jam out of it. Families, how many people in your house, you get a pound. He gave one to Nick Lekanoff, that Attu guy. Nick Lekanoff, he don't understand him but smiles all the time. Make me laugh. [Laughs] Well, I know some of it, but I can't talk it.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Yeah. But he told Nick Lekanoff, "*Qawaalimax*." I know that word, anyway. *Qawaalimax*. Sea lion flipper. Sea lion flipper. Sea lion flipper in dry fish. Goddamned, everybody making dry fish. Good dry fish because there are no flies, not really windy, not really warm. Goddamn, dry fish dry good. Like up in north. I wondered when it was going to dried up, I was thinking, but no it don't take long. Take one week, take 'em home. Goddamned, keep it good winter. Not moldy. I used to get from the north, one lady. Must be died or somebody quit em. Used to send me some dry fish. Forgot his name anyway. When I was up in north, I find it.

Goddamned that Fede was taking my place on a boat. I was a cook on a boat, Alaska Housing boat. I used to cook for 20 people. That's all I'd do on the boat. Didn't anybody like em cooking, so that's okay then. The goddamned, the Norweigan skipper, the skipper was on the boat. He wanted boiled fish. I have to boil fish for him. I got to boil potato for him. Give it to him, boy, he liked. He don't like to clean 'em by knife. He'd pulled the skins off.

RH: Ah, yeah.

NG: "You're thrown the vitamins away," I told him. I should have give him seal oil but I didn't! [Laughs]

RH: Where did people in Makushin get their salmon from?

NG: Volcano Bay.

RH: Ah ha.

NG: In that Pumicestone Bay. Pumicestone Bay got nothing but dog salmon. One bay between Kashega. People, ah, big dory used to go there, rowed up. One time, my grandfather inboard engine used to run. Two of the dories go there, seining.

Goddamned, the only other kind of fish we got there for seining. I didn't go there that time. Nothing but mans go there fishing. Jesus, boat load of goddamned fish, good for salting and drying.

RH: They'd bring them back to the village then?

NG: Um-hmm. Everything we get we deliver to the aged's house. But after he [Pete Olsen] come in I don't like it. Sometime, ah, sometime bald out. Come in I watched him coming in, so, I helped him pull his boat up. Goddamned, what he get he put it in a bag, take it home. He didn't give me nothing. I didn't like him. I always said, "*Tayamiklinax*" —stingy man. Yeah. I used to sit down on the beach, eating bar of candy. I used to throw half of it in the water, for my dad. Pretty hard to get over it. He used to teach me. Goddamned, he used to read Aleut books.

RH: Your dad used to read Aleut books? Yeah.

NG: If forgot all about it. He teach me. After Russians, Aleut talk, made it, John Veniaminov, Innokentii.

RH: Who read the services at the church in Makushin?

NG: Simeon Lekanoff.

RH: Ah.

NG: Simeon Lekanoff, my dad, Matfey used to be running it. Whoever wanted go, do it, you know. That's the way the people used to do then.

RH: And who was the midwife in Makushin? Did you have a midwife there?

NG: What do you mean?

RH: To help with babies, delivering babies.

NG: My grandmother and Nick Borenin's grandmother. Because they've been training way before from other people. Yeah. She born me, too, I know—I didn't know!

RH: Right.

NG: [Laughs] That's the way they do it, all along. Everybody can help. Anybody help. They used to teach them other young girls, two young womans. They told the other young womans we're not going to be that way all the time, we might be gone. . . .

RH: In Makushin, who was the chief in Makushin? Was there a chief when you were growing up?

NG: Elia Borenin.

RH: Elia. And the second chief?

NG: My dad.

RH: Your dad. Did they have third chiefs, too, or mostly first and second?

NG: First and—them chiefs used to come in and talk to this chief. Unalaska chief used to be the big for other people

RH: Alexei Yatchmenev.

NG: Um-hmm. His other son named Alexei Yatchmenev, his youngest son?

RH: Um-hmm.

NG: He died. Goddamned, he been out, his brother John Yatchmenov and Nick Lekanoff. Nick Lekanoff is not really big. Went down in a skiff. That's the time I went out, too, that day. Matfey and Steve Lekanoff. We went halibut fishing. I mean, fishing over there in the pass. Them east wind picked up so we turned back and we got home. I don't know when he left but I heard him he didn't come back. When you come this way from that dock, so he stopped in his camp, that's old Kusta's camp, used to be Alec Yatchmenev's for fishing ground. 'Cause way inside [at the head of Captains Bay] is Nick Lekanoff's—Nick Shaishnikoff's dad's fishing grounds. That Alexei Yatchmeev used to camp over at Eider Point.

RH: Yes.

NG: I told Ruthie about it. She just now find out about it. Must be a lot of village over there, big village before.

RH: Yeah, that's what I've heard. Yeah.

NG: Yeah. Goddamned, lot of skeleton under it, way under.

RH: Nick, at Makushin, when you were a child, what was your house like? I mean, ah, you know, where was the door? Did you have an entry way?

NG: Yeah, we got almost like this next house. Our roof we got a bedroom, two big rooms and no living room. Living room was where we used to eat, kitchen stove there.

RH: How did you, what kind of, was it a wood stove or coal?

NG: Wood stove.

RH: Wood stove. Uh-uhh.

NG: We didn't get no oil. Pete Olsen used a wood stove, too.

RH: Where did you get the wood from because—?

NG: Lot of wood on lot of bays. That's the place we used to go. Makushin didn't have no wood. People used to, ah, whoever find wood first they hauled it. That's what it seemed like it in Makushin. Long as I been in, I liked it 'cause it's the only one I know, when I was a kid. Go in there and go to bed. Go in there and eat. Hang on to my grandmother. I don't like people. Maybe I was jealous, jealous of other boys. My dad come around sometimes, "That's not your mom. That's your grandmother!" I don't like it! [Laughs] "No, that's my mom!" I used to call my real mom *ayagax*^, 'cause I'm daddy's atcha. "Ayagax^, that's my wife."

RH: Ah ha.

NG: I used to call her my wife. [Laughs] Well, anything I call anybody something.

RH: Did you have a steam bath in Makushin?

NG: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's better than these. Really good steambath.

RH: Was it owned by everybody?

NG: Everybody, yeah. Whoever started it first. This family clean it the next morning. That's how they do that. Sometimes there's no wood so everybody donate wood. Cook 'em. I used to take bath there, I know. But I can't stay inside with those big guys, too Goddamned hot. People said one time Pete Olsen, goddamned drinking, he wanted steambath. "I'm going to steambath." And he got there and laid down and he went to sleep. And I got up and hurry up and took off. Too goddamned hot in there when they use it.

RH: Did it have different levels?

NG: Yeah. Used to have two beds and one different place you can put hot water on it. Man take a bath first and woman take a bath next but when woman take a bath, got to

have a watchman. These people used to watch around there. We don't trust those goddamned gold-miners.

RH: Ah.

NG: Stay there late. That's when they killed one lady in Makushin. Right after service. She went over to the warehouse, she was going over to the warehouse to get something. Dark. She never come home so people looked for her. They didn't find it. Find her next day, right in the creek. Somebody stop blood on the side of it. Goddamned, them Norwegians.

RH: What were they doing there?

NG: I don't know. Killing people, I guess. There was gold mining, but they're quitting but they didn't come in this way. I know a guy named John Reinkin.

RH: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

NG: I meet him in the Native Hospital one time. He was there. That's all. Everybody know him really because he'd come to town to get something to eat once in awhile. Pete Olsen not to give him food. I don't care about Pete Olsen. I'd give him some food. And those old Makushin people they could stay there that time. They don't like Pete Olsen, that's why my Grandfather and family go.

RH: I think John Reinkin was related to Henry Swanson, ah, because Henry's grandfather was a Reinkin.

NG: Yeah?

RH: Was a Reinkin, yeah.

NG: I think Henry Swanson Orthodox?

RH: Yes, I think so.

NG: Yeah, I think so, too, but he never go to church.

RH: No, no. Except to be baptized and buried, I guess.

NG: [Laughs] That's what he do! Like Larry's father. He never go to church. Wait 'till he died—he go to church.

RH: After the war, this, the houses in here, New Town—

NG: Yeah?

RH: How did people get this property?

NG: Well, some people had properties there anyway, you know, those old houses.



RH: Uh-uhh

NG: Some of them all beat up; most of them. Them army guys in there drinking, making a mess all over our house.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Some of the houses tear down.

RH: But here in New Town, these were people from the other villages, mostly, right?

NG: Makushin, Biorka, Makushin village. Not any more.

RH: No, no, but it used to be.

NG: Only two Kashega people on this side.

RH: So there was Mike and Dora Kudrin over here.

NG: Yeah, Mike Kudrin.

RH: And then next to them was Kusta and Helen Lekanoff?

NG: Kusta and Helen, Helen Lekanoff, that's Kusta's wife.

RH: Yeah.

NG: That lot over there used to be Henry, Henry, Henry Peter's.

RH: Oh, Ok.

NG: That's the one I took it away from him. The last one over there was Sophie's.

RH: And Henry Peter's. Is that where Molly lived? Molly Lukanin.

NG: No, it was my house last. He was there after my stepfather drowned and I took his place. My mother paid, my wife paid for it. But I can't prove it. I told her to get that pass, the receipt, from Mr. McNiece. McNiece was selling them, that's the time. And he paid only two hundred fifty dollars for his property. I think some said forty dollars.

RH: Ah ha. For the deed.

NG: From outside

RH: Now on this side there was Andrew Makarin down by the creek.

NG: Creek, yeah.

RH: And then—

NG: And next was Peter Samokinsky.

RH: Ah.

NG: Right next door.

RH: Where was he from?

NG: Peter Samokinsky I think was from here. Somebody asked me that. I don't know nothing about him. When he was young he used to go Makushin, go fishing, for that cannery. That time, Volcano — Makushin cannery is gone. My dad used to take me there, about this high, in a dory sometime but no local people working there.

RH: No.

NG: Philipinos and Chinese. He told me, "Watch Chinese after lunch. They're going to smoke a pipe." I don't know what "pipe" means. *Truuvkax*^, he told me then. After a while he, goddamned, he got a long pipe. Fill it up and light it up, put it between his tooth, nail it down and went to sleep. Couple puffs and he went to sleep. Sleep for a while, working hours, he wake up, clean his pipe and put it away, and start working. I think it's got some kind of drug.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: That's the way they do that.

RH: Wow. Then next to you, was that Arthur and Elsie Lekanoff?

NG: That's from Makushin, that's my uncle, my real uncle.

RH: Ah. Okay.

NG: That's his sister was my mother. Periscovia. Her sister was Natalia, the one who bring the body in. [The one whose body was brought in recently.]

RH: Oh, okay. . . .

NG: . . . . Goddamned, that graveyard don't have no place up there left.

RH: Up here?

NG: Um-hmm. The people on this side here are on top of the other people.

RH: Yeah. It's been used for quite a while.

NG: Oh, yeah. Well, one time, long time ago, I don't know his name, but the top box was open, open, opened it up. Nice clean box inside. All the meat come off from the body. Looked like somebody swept it on one side. I looked at him. Goddamned wondered who that skeleton guy in the middle, not even meat pretty close by.

RH: Wow. Wow.

NG: I don't know. Long time ago people buy books, said angel come around and cleaned them. That one, on both sides got look like meat in there. I don't know, looked

like mud. Some kind of plant grow on it, got water on it. I didn't touch it. I don't want to break it.

RH: Right.

NG: Last time I dig a hole up there for Hope, Charlie Hope.

RH: Oh, yeah.

NG: The whole family's up there. His wife and his daughter. I don't think they bring his son up here. Oh, yeah, he's got a son up there, too, the oldest one. . . .

RH: Hmm.

NG: But he got one brother died out there, somewhere. He wasn't married, too, but he died. He went out. Oh, somewhere around San Francisco.

RH: Oh.

NG: There's Russian Orthodox there, I guess.

RH: Oh, yeah, yeah, in fact, yeah.

NG: And the priest up there before, too, he died there. He the one married to Sophie. Yeah, he was blessing people.

RH: Hmm.

NG: After American got this from Russian, before Russians leaving from here, got nothing to give us, these Aleut peoples. So they give them that church, a present.

RH: Hm hmm.

NG: Ever since Aleut take care of it and use it.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: That's the way it's supposed to be.

RH: Um hmm.

NG: Same thing they do that up in Russia.

RH: I saw Father Bourdukofsky this morning—

NG: Yeah

RH: And he said that, ah, 300 people went into the church yesterday off of a tour boat.

NG: Yeah.

RH: Yeah. So I hope they, I hope they left an offering, that they paid to go in and —

[Laughs]

NG: Yeah. That's what a father do that, in Russian, and blessing people. People not blessing when I was a kid.

RH: Hmm.

NG: Second World War Two moved from that place, the Russian side. They moved in, oh, Jesus Christ, over 2 – 300 people.

RH: Ah. Now when you were in Makushin, did a priest ever come to Makushin?

NG: Once a month. Not once a month. He's supposed to but sometimes only boat running he go there. Yep. Only time bishop go there, bless the town. Ah, no one tell father about it. He used to bless this town. Go around the town, this side. Never do it for many years now. Doctor, I mean, priest done that after war. Bless them and everything. Even you better trust the blessing. That's what he told us.

RH: Ah. And that was Father Baranov?

NG: Uh huh.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Yeah, that Father Baranov, he's a strong father. Both died, too, after they got down there. [San Francisco] His wife. His wife holler at me in Russian one time and I don't know what the hell talking about! [Laughs] Chickens over there. Chickens in St. Paul.

RH: Hmm.

NG: Goddamn, one chicken, Jesus Christ, rooster, hollering like hell. He come out of his house and he talking American, I don't know what the hell he's saying. Maybe, "Who ate my chicken?", maybe. [Laughs] I told him, "Nobody bother it." . . .

RH: Well, Nick. Thank you very much.

NG: That's okay.

RH: I don't know if I can stop this machine now. I'll try it.

NG: I could tell stories. Maybe make a story some time. Maybe I'll send it to you.

RH: Yeah, or, you know, I'm going to be here for ten days. Maybe I could come back.

NG: Yeah, you could do that.

RH: That would be good.

NG: I want to tell you the story how them Russians come. How the people for the lucky charm they come in this Unalaska.

RH: That would be wonderful. Yeah. Okay.

## 6. Nicholai Galaktionoff

June 4, 2004

[The CD begins in mid-sentence with Nick talking about the men who used to gather outside in the morning to observe and predict the weather.]

Nick Galaktionoff: . . . what time it's going to start storm.

Ray Hudson: How did they do that?

NG: Well, in the morning, those storm people used to get up early in the morning and look at the clouds, what it look like and which way running and how fast I don't know.

RH: Um hmm

NG: He knew. Pretty close, people used to be right. But this time it's going to be wind is going to pick up—pretty close. Goddamn, it starts windy.

RH: Yeah.

NG: 'cause they don't want people too far out, long ways out, cause didn't have no engine, and after that dory come out, cod fishing.

RH: Oh, yeah. When did the first dories arrive? Like at Makushin?

NG: Well, my dad got a brand new dory. Everybody got dories; about 5 dories there.

RH: Huh.

NG: My grandfather got two. One got an inboard engine, one skiff with no engine.

RH: And they gradually took the place of baidarkies?

NG: Oh, yeah. . . . They got good place. [Nick misunderstood my question and thought I was referring to sea eggs, known as baidarkies.] Over Biorka same thing. Sea eggs and baidarkies. I knew them too. But I was over there nine years. Biorka.

RH: So what was it like at Biorka when you were over there?

NG: Oh, I like to go out hunting, fishing. That was my life that time.

RH: Ah, yeah.

NG: I still do, but I can't go out. I could go out now but—I always go with Sam Svarny.

RH: Oh, yeah.

NG: But his wife he don't want to let me go. Told his husband about it that's why he don't want to take me out. He don't want me to fall off the boat.

RH: [Laughs]

NG: I got a good life jacket anyway. I always wear it. Looks like a coat.

RH: Ah, Nick, . . . how about some information about Biorka and Andrew Makarin and the folks that lived over there?

NG: Yeah, the first time I stay there I stay with Andrew Makarin. She's a blind lady used to be there.

RH: His wife.

NG: Andrew's wife. She's blind. She's got one eye. That thing happened when she was small. So she was blind the rest of the days, rest of the years. Well, that lady can't even see nothing but he do something for himself. Wash clothes, clean his house. Used to call me different name. . . . Called *Aagliichanax*<sup>^</sup>. *Aagliichanax*<sup>^</sup> is Germany. We'd call each other *Aagliichanax*<sup>^</sup> in Aleut.

RH: What does that mean?

NG: *Aagliichanax*<sup>^</sup> means Germany.

RH: Germany, hah. Why did she call you that?

NG: Well, we used to call em, call each other, like, everybody call Ruff Ermeloff—you know him—

RH: Yeah.

NG: That's the one they called *Aagliichanax*<sup>^</sup>. I'm his atcha, that's why he called me *Aagliichanax*<sup>^</sup>. And the same time I'm after a girl, too, then. That was my wife, Irene. He want me to stay on this side. I don't like to stay on this side. I don't like people drinking. Sometime people get in that trouble.

RH: Was it hard here after the war?

NG: Oh, everybody, everybody working. Clean the houses, fix the houses, mostly roofs. Paper all blowed away. Army guys split the door. Some people locked their door.

[John Galaktionoff speaking on the radio: Dad, you got your radio on?]

RH: Oh, just a second. I'll stop this.

[There is a break and the tape resumes with Nick speaking about his dog.]

NG: I got em from Nikolski.

RH: Oh, yeah?

NG: Irene bring it, I mean, Julia bring it in.

RH: Ok.

NG: Goddamn, about 16 years ago.

RH: Man. He's an active little dog.

NG: Lot of people call him "puppy." [Laughs]

RH: [Laughs] He looks like it. . . . So, Nick, after the war, when did you first go over to Biorka?

NG: Well, I was here more than two years. I used to work in the church. I helped Joe Chagin. Find the people to fix the roof.

RH: Oh, here in Unalaska?

NG: Uh hah. Got to work on it. Finally we got it fixed. Now they changed it all, last time, last couple years ago. Take 'em two years to work on it. All the lumber start getting, 2 by 4s, all rottin' away, ends rottin' away. Change all around! There were carpenters in town.

RH: How was the church in Biorka when they got back?

NG: Well, it was just about the same. It's not too bad, not really big anyways. It was all right. Makushin it was already started leaking.

RH: Ah.

NG: That's what I hear from that Elia Borenin. They fix every church after war.

RH: Did Elia Borenin go back to Makushin after the war?

NG: No, he went to Akutan.

RH: Akutan.

NG: We got a head guy on a barge, on a boat, that went take care of us, but not, not other villages. Unalaska people got different, different leader. Guy named Mr. Long. . . .

RH: . . . after World War II, after the people came back from Southeastern Alaska and they came here to Unalaska, how did the people from the villages, from Makushin and Kashega and Biorka, how did they fit in with the Unalaska people?

NG: Well, they leave them all in Akutan.

RH: Ah.

NG: Three village people: Kashega, Makushin, and Biorka.

RH: Do you know why they picked Akutan to leave them there?

NG: Well, I don't know why. Goddamn, the leader on there was not really a good guy. Those small villages they don't want to go there. I told them to talk to him, they don't give a damn. But this is mostly young man, he's got a lot of girls over in Akutan that time. He be after the girls, I guess.

RH: Hmm.

NG: But Andrew Makarin, after he got there he stay there one week and—summer or spring time—he come in his own boat.

RH: Hmm.

NG: A dory.

RH: Um hmm.

NG: Go all the way from Akutan to Biorka. And he got two guys in the boat with him, Alec and Victor.

RH: Um hmm.

NG: Trapping for Unalaska church. They lived in Andrew Makarin's house and check all the houses. Houses okay, in good shape yet. So they come in, put his boat over there in Ugadaga Bay, and walk from there, come in and talk to Verne Robinson. What he want to do. So that Verne Robinson asked him to Army doctors, Army people, Army leader. So he went down with him and talked to them and said he don't want to live in Anchorage, I mean Akutan. So he tell him he could use a barge, them barge that run themselves, make a boat out of barges, for using in wartime.

RH: Um hmm

NG: So he give him ten days. Said he's going to Akutan and pick up Akutan people and went to Biorka. So Andrew went to Akutan and told all the Biorka people pack up everything ready and he got supplies, too. Shore lumber. Unload over Biorka and Army barge come in and bring some more lumber over. And that's why he built that Peter Lukanin house.

RH: Ah.

NG: Used to be only four houses there. And the wind picked it up.

RH: Hmm.



NG: Brand new house. Goddamned pretty big sized house. Sometime big storm hit.

Biorka people, no, no Biorka people over there that time.

RH: They had moved to Unalaska?

NG: Yeah, moved in. After about three or four years.

RH: Hm hmm

NG: I don't believe it. Jesus Christ, houses I used to stay in, goddamn, all blown away.

RH: Wow. So what did the people do over there after the war?

NG: Well, they started living like they used to, I guess. People go out and go fishing, duck hunting, seal hunting. Sometimes come over every month and take some groceries over to Beaver Inlet. From there they cut across 'cause they got inboard engines. Well, they're not starving over there. . . . we used to have a lot of food. That's why I like to stay there. Go out hunting.

RH: Ah.

NG: Well, me and Coco, we used to be duck hunting. His brother is smaller. His sister is still living in Anchorage.

RH: Really?

NG: Margaret. . . .

RH: How many, who were the families that went over to Biorka after the war?

NG: Well, everybody. Biorka people about 30 people.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: That's all.

RH: So it would be Andrew Makarin's family and Ruff Ermeloff's family.

NG: The two families, like Peter Lukanin's, got one boy.

RH: Ah ha.

NG: Him and his wife. . . . He's married to my sister.

RH: Okay, to Molly.

NG: Molly, yeah.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: And Nekefer Ermeloff married to that other girl. Used to grow up in Anfesia's house. Catherine.

RH: Oh, Catherine. Okay.

NG: Catherine died in Seattle. . . .

RH: How long after the people came back from Biorka did Andrew, Andrew—go ahead—

NG: All of them come in 1956.

RH: '56, ah.

NG: Yeah, I think that's the time I got married.

RH: Hmm.

NG: '56. If I'm still married I could be more than 50 years. . . .

RH: Nick, after World War Two, here at Unalaska, the chief was Bill Zaharoff? Is that right? Do you know?

NG: Yeah, I think Bill Zaharoff. Yeah.

RH: But he wasn't here too long, huh?

NG: But he died.

RH: Yeah. Yeah.

NG: After that Doc.

RH: Doc. Yeah, right, right.

NG: Old Man Doc.

RH: Bill Dyakanoff.

NG: Bill Dyakanoff, yeah. Damn Anfesia, you know, Anfesia running, goddamn, trying running this town people.

RH: Yeah, right, right.

NG: That's what he do. Burnett Inlet he do the same way.

RH: Ah, ah.

NG: I don't like it.

RH: Hmm.

NG: But I didn't against him, you know, but he be talking about people. Got himself a better house. Everybody got poor house. Goddamn, St. Paul people, that's the worst.

Big warehouses, no partitions. People hanging blankets [for] partitions.

RH: In Southeastern, yeah.

NG: Sleep on the floor.

RH: Um.

NG: 1944, I been there one week.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Heading for St. Paul.

RH: Ah, okay.

HG: Coming back we stayed in the St. George side another week. St. George side is not too bad. That's a bay, bay with two canneries. Cannery on this side, cannery on this side. Old canneries. Well, everybody got bed and everybody got good place. . . .

RH: Nick, one time you told me something about Beaver Inlet, ah, and about how there was a chief out on the point of Beaver Inlet. [See *Cuttlefish Two: Four Villages*. Unalaska City School District. 1978:54-55]

NG: *Chaluuknax*^ Bay. Right across that Beaver Inlet. Different guy owned that place. One time, can't do nothing so he give it to Bill Brown. Supposed to be a gold mine there. That gold is not really good. Mostly gold rocks. But anybody dig it could be pretty good.

RH: Now, what about a long time ago. There must have been Aleut villages over in Beaver Inlet.

NG: Oh, yeah, yeah. Way in Beaver Inlet. You know, like this Unalaska's got 40 villages on this island, way before. That's what I heard. Family and his friends, moved into a place he could get sea food in wintertime easy. That's why the people after, before American and Russian. That's why people find a place they could stay and get some sea food, make himself hooks out of bones. They be fishing for pogies and other fish by 'em, too, with them pogies, looks like sculpin, but they got a different color. They are good eating. When I was on Biorka used to fishing and eat 'em. When I was tring to go fishing with mom in Makushin I was too small, want to keep me on the rock. So, sit down on the beach, play rocks, that's all. Small rocks. Then over Biorka, goddamned big sea eggs there that old village.

RH: The old village—

NG: Old village outside, another village on the inside. Just like they do that to Makushin. Volcano Bay people live on it before, especially on this side of that cliff. They got more people lived there before, way underground. And after Makushin cannery

open, they got lumber from there, little lumber, try to build the houses in that village. Village name is *Ignichiinax*<sup>^</sup>. In Aleut. Nowadays what they call Makushin.

RH: Was that the name for Volcano Bay, too?

NG: No. Volcano Bay just Makushin. [*Magusim tanadgusii*: Makushin Village] Cause they come from Makushin over there [to the new site] they call it Makushin. The name of it in Aleut is *Ignichiinax*<sup>^</sup>. I don't know what that means, that *Ignichiinax*<sup>^</sup>. That Nikolski used to be *Umnak*.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Before the war. Wartime they changed its name. There are mostly top people, top people used to be in the west. Nikolski all the way to Attu.

RH: Hmm.

NG: Nikolski and the Four Mountains, in front of us on this side. But that chief, he know something is going to be happen some day. He called the chief, the Four Mountain chief, to here. Finally come in to have meeting with that other chief, and the chief he wanted people on high mountain, high hills, watch the west. Them baidarkies, I mean, baidarkies come from Atka and Attu. But I don't think they're going to really fight, I guess. They going to fight, come in to this island and guy on top side see 'em and so he went down and tell the chief. Chief send them baidarkies out, two or three baidarkies out, food on the water even for them. He knew he's not fighting. When they're close by 'em that baidarky come from west he quit. He stand his paddle straight up on his baidarky. Hold it and wait for the baidarky to come right against him. "What you want? You want anything from our chief?" "No." Everybody was starving. Water. Food. So he give him what he got, and give it to him. Time to go back. That's what he do. Many years before he find Russian, Russian ship.

Finally find the two boats on the sea. Calm weather, them boats are not running but stay in one place, rolling, that's all. See a couple guys come down, told that other chief, Four Mountains chief. That chief he don't want to take a chance so he sent baidarkies this way. One for Nikolski, one for Kashega, one for Makushin, one to come in, another baidarky going to Akutan and Biorka. King Cove, Sand Point, False Pass. "Well, I'm not sure, them boys see something different. It's not our boat." From there he

got people, Unalaska people, collect some other people. There were 3,000 people hide away here. That's what I hear.

RH: Hmm

NG: I wasn't around then. I was not even baby then! [Laughs] That's what that Luke Shelikoff told us anyway. Maybe that's the time just baby, maybe. That's what he told us. I think after the Russian left from here not more than 100 years.

RH: Yeah.

NG: 'Cause people find out about that church. It was there. They give it to us and finally went 100 years. They changed it around. Other people went to watch, finding that boat come in—I think I told you this—

RH: That's okay. It's interesting.

NG: Yeah. Boat come in, come closer and that chief talked to this guy. He wants second chief stay on top of the bank and give order to this other guys. Still have to raise his hand up, the four man on the beach. Got weapons right behind 'em. People used to have, called *saigiqax*<sup>^</sup> [Bergsland: *igiqax*<sup>^</sup>] *kayloox*<sup>^</sup>. People that's the way they used it. Harpoon, *saigiqax*<sup>^</sup>. Got weapons in him. Didn't have a knife. Got half-moon knives, out of black knife, black rock. Finally count them guys on the boat. They only count nine people work on that lifeboat. After lifeboat landed and start counting people going out of the life boat. Only five of them. Four man left in the boat. Some people hide away way up there and watching for that second chief hand, raise it up. Them two guys supposed to wave his hand went half-ways. So they do, but no one waved from the lifeboat. *Tayax*<sup>^</sup>*kusutuungin*, called mad people. And after that close almost went to shore and wave his hand again and two guys wave his hand, them guys got a rifle with them. And one guy in the back turning the boat. Two guys sit down together and row the boat. And in a little while, goddamn, that guy shot one guy. One guy on the beach kill em. And the second chief raise his hand and warn. Baidarkies got on the water and go to the boat. Them guys on the boat shoot once and quit. 'Cause he got to load his gun up. That time these guys get them by harpoon. Sink down the boat and then got three guys, didn't find one guy. Finally look for him, finally come out on the bow. He got a big knife and swinging it all over. But there's one Aleut would like that knife. Anybody kill 'em he take that knife. And some people come in and tell chief what he find on the

boat. Only four guys that he killed there. Five altogether they killed. Six, I think, yeah, six killed. The chief he don't want no more killing. He want teach from them. He told these other guys you want teach his language, let him teach you language. But a long time, after six months, they understand each other then.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: From that they know another boating coming this way. He told that chief, "*Sunax^ wangudax^*." Boat is going to come in, he told the chief. And finally boat, army, them war ships come in. He try and kill this people, too, but it still the same kind of guns. They have to load it up and put beebie in it and pull the trigger. Already done that at Attu and Atka. Kill over 20,000 people out there. Get some guys off some islands and take them out and kill them. The youngest people on the boats. Over 300 people on three boats. Take them all the way to Russia.

RH: Hmm.

NG: But that one lady told me there's over 400 people now. Could be still healthy but Russian didn't have no good medicine. Eat the food, what kind of food they kill and eat, seal, ducks. Some sea lions in Russia, too, no ice. That island I'm talking about it they said they got good meat. . . .

RH: Nick, would you tell that story that you just told me, about the Russians and the Four Mountain people, would you, would you tell some of that in Aleut?

NG: I'm just about part of it now.

RH: Oh, okay.

NG: After that Russian people and Aleuts stay way up on top side, watched all the time. They saw that Russian boat and they come and report it, come down and report it, and send baidarkies this way. So many days the one boat come in, that's the one they take three out of it and kill the rest of it, nine people. But three survived. The one who taught the Aleuts Russian language, and Aleuts teach him Aleut language. 'Cause there Innokentii, Adan ["Father" in Aleut] Innokentii and John Veniaminov, he got Aleut language themselves before, before these Aleuts. Because these Aleuts didn't even have no names. *Agunaachixnax*, they called themselves each other. Names seafood names, fish names: *Ikeethuganux^*, other one. *Aateethakathax^*. Cod, just like codfish but you can see its skinny, thin one most of the time all the way. The Russians, he said he's

gonna come, the Russians going to come in some time and so they do, they come in and start killing Aleuts. Not very many, though. But some. The priest and bishop both come in fast enough, stop everybody. Start making Christians and from there we find out what they do up in the west. They're killing, killing, twenty-thousand Aleuts, woman and children, old people.

I talked to them Aleut people in Russian. They know about it but they don't want to talk about it.

RH: They were from Atka and Attu, right?

NG: Um hmm.

RH: Uh uh.

NG: All Attu and Atka. And other Native people live there, too.

RH: Hmm.

NG: But that's a different name, not Aleut. . . .

RH: Would you mind telling some of that story about the Four Mountain people in Aleut.

NG: That's a different story. Different from Russian, but it's from Four Mountains.

RH: Right. Yeah.

NG: Well, those people looking for lucky charm. Didn't have nothing no more. Just like they want to buy something didn't have no money to buy. Them Aleuts do same way. Their lucky charm is not working no more. And most people didn't know how to make lucky charm. He was there, that time, the chief come to that Unalaska, meeting with the Unalaska Chief. He see one guy almost like his one guy, his hunter, but he never think of it this way then, he looked at him and he know it. Second house from the chief's house. And after he got down there [Four Mountains] people can't get no more seal, can't get no more ducks. Well, they catch some once in awhile anyway but don't get them like they used to. But that chief want a lucky charm.

[Telephone rings]

RH: I'll stop this.

[Recording begins]

NG: Call his people and have a meeting and he told them got to go looking for lucky charm cause they knew the chief is got good lucky charm. So, he notice somebody

almost like his hunter there. He could change it around. He's got all kinds of things he could stop your brains and everything. That's what he's trying to do there.

[Nick aside, "Wait, I'll call Nicky's house." Ray, "Okay."]

[Recording continues] Four people going to come this way. People used to make himself a fox. And they got no place to land but a goddamned big sea. They're out there landing at that No Name Cove—you know No Name Cove.

RH: Um hmm.

NG: Landing and cover up his baidarky good and up in the hills they walked this way first. Little while and it got evening. Got three red fox and one cross fox. Make themselves all foxes and start coming this way. Cause he told them not to walk on the bank. Got people out there, too, Morris Cove. They come this way, all the way, finally come in in the morning. See that fox all up above the graveyard. They been there all day, sleeping. He talked to them fox, they know what they got to do. That one guy is going to come in, come out of his fox, and he's got one fox with him, night time, come to town, to that place a little ways from the chief's house, standing up, looking around, looking for that—his chief told him, right next to the chief's house. He's not sure it's the chief's house. But the chief always do that. He can't settle down, so he climbed the roof, got look-out window up on top side, just the grass. And he look around, finally he find somebody standing up, fox with him. "I wonder why my seal hunter [is] with a fox?" He come down and he got on his bed and sit down for awhile, can't stand it no more so he went up again. Then that one guy with the fox is gone. One guy with the fox was beyond the house and he went to that house, other house, and he told that other guy, told fox, he said the chief told him about next to chief's house they got dead man's bone, got to poke it with him in his back. And this guy didn't know nothing then.

And, he told that fox, "Go move around. Make a noise for me. If he hear you, he'll come out."

When the fox do that he got windows there but you can't look out of 'em, you know, seal guts, dry seal guts for his window. These houses used to use them before, that's what I hear. Seal guts. Pretty soon somebody open the door from inside, look out, and that guy is standing right behind the house. Finally he went in again awhile then he come out, this guy stabbed him right behind him. Not killing him; he's going to come to



later. Then he took it over to his other fox and he told that fox, “Okay, you watch, you watch real good. You know what to do,” he told him. He’s going to see if he’s going to call this guy in, maybe take him over to the place he’s standing up, you could run in and get the chief’s lucky charm. We’re going to get one now.” He take his top clothes off and put it on, put his jacket right on and went inside. He see one lady sewing kamlaika on his bed, his wife ask him, it’s not the same guy but can’t recognize him, “What’s outside?” “Oh, nothing. Nothing like that but I got to stay out there and watch for awhile.” He went over. He know where the lucky charms are, right above the door. There’s a little cupboard there. Each house has got a little cupboard right above the door. Took his jacket, hanging coat and put it on, put his hand in there and feel around, and he find the lucky charm and put it in his pocket, and he went out.

He went out and he told that fox, “I got one! I got one lucky charm. Try to get the chief’s. That’s the one our chief wanted.”

So, Unalaska people used to make himself an eagle.

RH: Ah.

NG: He could fly. That fox went over to the chief’s house. He hide away behind the chief’s house. He could hear him what he’s doing. In the morning started anyway, that guy he went up with the lucky charm he got into the fox hole. “Well, we got one,” he told them other guys. “I got one. We’re going to have two maybe in a little while.”

At the same time the second chief come in into the chief’s house. And the chief told him, “Boy, I know something is going to happen. I can’t lay down in my bed so I went up to my lookout window and look. My seal hunter over there standing by the mud pile there. He went with a fox, a blue fox, red fox, go and get him. Tell him to take his fox too.” Fox! [Laughs]

Second chief he went over to that guy. Guy get up and have a tea, keep praying for tea and eat fish. I don’t know how in the hell those people cooking fish, hang it below the fire. And he told him, “Chief wants you. Chief wants to see you bad.”

“What for? I can’t go seal hunting today.”

“That’s okay. You can see him. He told to take your fox.”

“Fox? I don’t take care of fox. I don’t have no fox.”

“Well, it must be. He see you last night.”

“He didn’t see me.”

And he went over to the chief’s house. The fox get ready to steal the lucky charm, but later.

“Did I see you standing over there after midnight? Where’s your fox?”

“I don’t have fox. I don’t have a live fox.”

“He was right against you.” [Laughs]

“Come. Let’s go. I’m going to take you over there and see your tracks.”

He take him over there. The fox went in there, take the lucky charm and tried to go out, hide away, and go up to that other fox hole. He got that lucky charm up there and the guy is happy. And he eat and wait for dark to come tonight.

And the chief he got the second chief and he told him, “I see your tracks right there and fox tracks there too.”

“Must be somebody else been there. About what time?”

“After midnight.” Didn’t have a time but people [knew]—

RH: Um hmm

NG: [Nick interrupts the story here.] I know Peter Lukanin make a time by sun.

RH: Ah.

NG: Before he got a big cratch [combination of crack and scratch] on his window. Sunshine hit the window, you know, just before it goes in that cratch he knows it’s twelve o’clock.

RH: Ah.

NG: I know he has to fix his time all time. [Nick resumes the story.]

And this guy, “No, not me. Somebody else must be in town.”

Chief, he didn’t say nothing. He went in. After awhile he, one guy and second chief, “Come on. Let’s play *agathan*. I know somebody in town.”

They went in there and Second chief fix everything up. Put tea and chief goddamn holler, “God damn it! Where’s my lucky charm? Somebody took it. God damn.” He been looking all around. He been looking through town. All the houses have been checked if they got a blue fox, I mean red fox. No one had no red fox. Live fox.

But this tracks looks like a second man's tracks but he's got fox with him. That other guy, "No, I didn't have no live fox."

Finally, evening comes. Little bit late them guys taken off from here. They went out past Morris Cove and he see two guys legs stick out under a bank. A brother and sister. They've got sea otter skin clothes, sea otter skin blankets. They been there a long time, they could see that, because it's nice digging. That brother and sister, they like it. They went down go to his baidarky, take his baidarky out on the gravel, and them guys took off right away.

He told them, "Are we going to eat something or are we out?" They were riding way out. He don't want to get caught from other points. All the points got people living in it. Watchmen. Keep going all the way and next day Unalaska people, two guys Unalaska people, two guys moving to the west, flying out. They could see those two kids on the beach, but they landed. The boy seen them guys over there. He told his sister, "Hey, they start coming this way, Unalaska people." The Morris Cove people he know it. "They're going to ask us questions. Don't tell them until they fill up our seal bag with sea food."

He come in and ask this boy, "You see anybody pass here?"

"If you want to know something about like that, you fill this seal stomach. Fill it up with sea eggs and gumboots, blue mussels. Bring it to me and I'll tell you what I see."

Those two guys filled that seal bag, seal stomach—goddamn, pretty big—he got enough so he took it in and give it to 'em. He tell him, "Well, I didn't see nobody, but I seen four foxes pass here. After that I went over that hill and looked and two baidarkies, this time with man, four man left, two baidarky left, two [men] on one baidarky on sea."

Thank that kid and they went looking at Ruff's Bay, I mean No Name Cove, and they went back and tell their chief. Other people come up from the west, too. He didn't see nothing. So he told him, "You two guys better go out and watch. He going to land out there somewhere. He got to rest. He going to land and rest."

The two eagles got down and land different sites, watch maybe another two days. They just about giving up but two baidarkies coming in. He was so happy. He landed and pulled the baidarky in the grass and cooking something and started eating it. Night comes anyway soon. The four man went to go asleep in the grass. And that time the two

eagles come down and look around in the baidarky, find them lucky charms. Take it and cut up the baidarkies. Leave them there and they went up to their place, stay, and watch them guys in the morning.

One guy up early in the morning and he look at the baidarky and he start hollering. He sees them cuts in the bottom. Well, they been there a long time and make one baidarky out of two baidarkies. And load up two guys inside and two guys outside, paddling back to the west, Four Mountains. Take them all day to pass Umnak Island, Nikolski, and from there to Four Mountain. Finally they got to Four Mountains. Four girls sit down on the beach waiting for them baidarkies to get there. One guy's lady said, "There's only one baidarky. I wonder where's that other one?"

Another lady started crying, "Maybe my husband."

Finally baidarky landed, people come and meet them and two guys come out. After awhile his husband come out. She happy. Tell them what happened.

Chief ask them, "You got your lucky charm now?"

"No, they took our lucky charm and tear our baidarkies out. So lucky we made one baidarky and we reached this far."

Boy, the chief get mad, but the people in those days no cussing. He didn't know cussing.

[On June 8 Nick recorded this story and one about the arrival of the Russians in Aleut. Transcriptions of those are not included in this report. Copies of the recordings have been given to the Alaska Native Languages Center and to the Unalaska City School District's Aleut program.]

So they found out what cussing after Russians come up here. Make Russian bad words. *Sutanatha*. That's the first word that come out. Start teaching from Russian after that, after Russians come to Unalaska. So they start teaching and from there they take another 60 people from here. Two boat loads, 30 people, 300 people. Take them all the way to St. Paul. St. George, St. Paul. Unload them at Northeast Point. That's what one guy told me one time at St. Paul. He heard a story about them. But no one there. They

got there nothing but seals. Aleuts happy there. “Oh, we’re going to go out and grab a seal.” You can’t grab a seal! [Laughs] Boy, they sharp bite them, fur seal.

RH: Now, Nick, was this before the Russians came?

NG: Before Russians. I think way before Russians people lived there. St. Paul, cause they find dishes, plates. But this Aleuts I’m talking about, Russians take them there.

RH: Ah. Okay.

NG: Already made a Christians out of them. That time made a church at Northeast Point. Russian help them make a church there and they know somebody going to run it. Reading and everything in the church. They name it St. Nicholas.

RH: Ah, St. Nicholas.

NG: Um hm. And after that build St. Paul and after Americans take over built St. Paul wooden, cement houses. Nothing but cement houses there. I don’t know about those new houses they build up there.

RH: Right.

NG: Petropavlovsk the name of the St. Paul church.

RH: Ah.

NG: Petropavlovsk. They got holiday, summertime, they got holiday Northeast Point holiday.

RH: Ah.

NG: St. Nicholas. That’s Nick Lekanoff’s holiday, too. I think he’s 78 now, I think.

RH: Oh, yeah, yeah?

NG: 79.

RH: 79. Yeah.

NG: 79, I got one year behind him. Mine is December.

RH: December.

NG: December 19. Well, I didn’t born that day though. People used to be by church names.

RH: Ah, okay.

NG: My mom told me I was born November 30<sup>th</sup>.

RH: Ah.

NG: So you could take me on December name.

RH: For chrismation, yeah. Yeah.

NG: So, maybe I was one month young. Yep. I tell about people making Christians. That's why some people have a two names. I always used to laugh at John Gordieff. John Gordieff and his brother is John Gordieff, too.

RH: Ah.

NG: I seen him just once. That's when they were young. Used to working with Patterson. Used to cook for Patterson.

RH: Oh, yeah?

NG: In a restaurant.

RH: So there were two John Gordieffs and they were brothers.

NG: Yeah. Other one named John Gordieff, he got—that other one was married one time, that's why he's got Victor Gordieff.

RH: Ah, okay.

NG: After he died he called that other John, daddy. So, that's the way he grow up.

RH: They were from Chernofski?

NG: Yeah, from Chernofski. Chernofski people.

RH: Because I think Anfesia one time said that John Gordieff knew a lot about whale hunting, oldtime whale hunting. Go ahead, I'll stop this.

[I stop and then restart the recording.]

NG: But get some ducks, though. Can't get no more fish except rock fish, pogies and sculpins. Get em between rocks. I used to like goddamned pogies.

RH: It used to be, I know, when I first came here in 1964, at that time there would still be Makushin people, and Biorka people, Unalaska people.

NG: Yeah, Walter used to bring me a lot of it over from inside Arthur Lekanoff's camp.

RH: Ah, okay.

NG: That's the Lekanoff camp now, Nick Lekanoff.

RH: Oh, okay

NG: Arthur build that steam house.

RH: Was that Broad Bay or Wide Bay?

NG: Between Eider Point and one bay, next bay. From there you've got reefs down right against the beach. He stay against with his boat and pick some gumboots, fishing

with his fish pole and get some pogies. Walter did that all the time. But Arthur's camp—

[The door opened and John returned and I stopped the recorder.]

## 7. Nikolai Galaktionoff

June 7, 2004

[In 1984 Nick Galaktionoff gave Unalaska Island place names to Knut Bergsland and these were included in the *Aleut Dictionary*. Whenever possible, the spellings in this transcription are taken from that work.]

Ray Hudson: Okay. This is June 7<sup>th</sup> with Nick Galaktionoff. Nick, I brought these charts, ah, of Beaver Inlet.

Nick Galaktionoff: Uh ha.

RH: And I thought maybe I could name some bays or something and you could comment on it? Ah, this first one [Army Corps of Engineers, Unalaska C-1, Alaska, Sheet 4228 I] is the mouth of Beaver Inlet. It shows English Bay on the Unalaska side and Deep Bay, and then over on the Biorka side it's got—Sisek Cove?

NG: Sisek Bay. Used to be there, Biorka side.

RH: Yeah, on the Biorka side. Yeah.

NG: Aleuts call it Sisan.

RH: Sisan. Now the old village was further out?

NG: Yeah. Achuug<sup>ix</sup> Tanax<sup>taqax</sup> that's what they call that. Didn't have no name. Achuug<sup>ix</sup> Tanax<sup>taqax</sup>. That's old long time ago village.

RH: . . . . Why did people move? Did you ever hear any stories why they moved?

NG: Which way, where?

RH: From the old village to the new village.

NG: I don't think so because I'm not happy when I leave Makushin.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Cause I can't do nothing much. I was 13 years old.

RH: No, I was wondering why the people at the old Biorka village moved to the new Biorka village.



1. Unalaska Bay
2. Kalekta Bay
3. English Bay
4. Unalga Island
5. Baby Islands
6. Deep Bay
7. Agamgik Bay
8. Chaluuknax^
9. Ugadaga Bay
10. Uniktali Bay
11. Dushkot Island
12. Erskine Bay
13. Kisselen Bay
14. Fiinal Bay
15. Tanaskan Bay
16. Aasxiyuux
17. Amugul Bay
18. Udamat Bay
19. Biorka
20. Sisek Cove
21. Achuug^ix^ Tanax^taqax^
22. Egg Island

NG: Well, they make a village there. Used to have that, live in that old village, and from there they find a place got a lumber to make a house, so they make a house and church there. From there everybody moved there, but it's not a good landing. Big sea running, storm pretty strong. Because the mountain, too, pretty close.

RH: Ah.

NG: Too close there. Hill on this side, call 'em Kiichxix<sup>^</sup> Kangax<sup>^</sup>tax<sup>^</sup>

RH: On the right side. [Note the different location for this in the dictionary. Later in the interview, Nick states there were two mountainsides where this braided rope was made.]

NG: Kiichxix<sup>^</sup> Kangax<sup>^</sup>tax<sup>^</sup> people used to call that. That's the name of it, Kiichxix<sup>^</sup>. You know, you can do it by [moves his hands] I don't know, I can't see—

RH: Oh, by braiding?

NG: Uh ha. You went down all the way up, from up there down couple times, and watch the seals. When they done the work when the woman do the month period, that's when they work on it.

RH: Ah.

NG: So that whale can't go under.

RH: Ah, they would stretch that grass rope across?

NG: Um hm.

RH: Across Beaver Inlet.

NG: And they cut 'em across and block all the whales go inside, and whale hunters inside whale hunting. Well, that's the way long time ago, way before Christians.

RH: Right.

NG: Because before Christians no any kind of superstition anywhere from anybody. But said they make it that way in two places. One on that Chaluuknax^ Bay [opposite Biorka Village], [and the other] that was Andrew's camp, Andrew Makarin camp. No, Aasxiyuux, yeah, Aasxiyuux, that's the name of it. . .

RH: . . . Irene Makarin was saying that there was a difference between "Biorka" and "Borka".

NG: Well, "Borka", that's all they call that. Or else somebody calls "Sedanka."

RH: Sedanka, yeah.

NG: But that Irene doesn't know nothing much about Biorka because, I didn't know either, because . . . Irene is Andrew Makarin's adopted [daughter] from here, Mike Borenin's daughter. Got brothers Sergie Borenin and John Borenin.

RH: From Makushin or Kashega?

NG: From here. . . .

RH: Which bay did you say Andrew had his camp in?

NG: Aasxiyuux. Yeah. The next one was Tanasxan [Tanaskan Bay].

RH: Tanasxan. Yes, okay.

NG: Next after Tanasxan was Ulg^umiix [Final Bay]. Pretty hard to pronounce.

Ulg^umiix. That's my red, silver salmon place. They used to gaff fish there. Live on the fish all winter. They got a big creek there.

RH: It shows a big creek going out of there. That's Final Bay, yeah.

NG: And that right across that Aasxiyuux was Ruff's [Ermeloff] camp island. Little island there named Duxsxn. . . .

RH: Let me get my other smaller map here. I think it's got. . . . [Unfolds "Geologic Map of Unalaska Island, Alaska, and Adjacent Submarine Areas", United States Department of the Interior, Geological Survey, bulletin 1028, Plate 75]. Right. Okay. Right. Yep.

NG: Duxsxn.

RH: Yes. I see it here. It is a little island just before Uniktali?

NG: Um hm.

RH: Now when people would take a skiff from Biorka to Ugadaga Bay.

NG: Ah, them people they don't used skiff. They used baidarky and double-ender.

RH: Ah, baidarky and double-ender.

NG: . . . . I can't stay in them one man baidarky. Too cranky for me.

RH: Yeah? You tried it thought?

NG: Hm hmm. I used two man baidarky. It's all right. I shoot fox.

RH: Really?

NG: Yeah. But the told me if you shoot a shotgun in a baidarky, you got to shoot way in the front. Don't shoot on the side. That's what I do. I got red fox. In that Sisek Bay. Sisin.

RH: Sisin. When you went from Biorka to Ugadaga, ah, how would you go. What route would you go? . . . . Did you just cut straight across Beaver Inlet?

NG: No, we used to go travel on other side all the way far as that Aasxiyuux. We'd cut across from there.

RH: Ah, okay.

NG: That's a short one anyway.

RH: Okay. So you'd stay along the shore a bit.

NG: Yeah.

RH: And then cut across.

NG: Um hm.

RH: Okay.

NG: The other two are bays, but I don't know the name of it.

RH: On Sedanka?. . . . The only ones on this map, they show Udamat Bay. It has an island in it.

NG: Udamax.

RH: Udamak?

NG: Udamax.

RH: Udamax.

NG: Goddamn. I forgot the places already! And the next bay to Chaluuknax^ Bay . . . . Agamgix^. Oh, I'm going out that way. Ugadaga Bay, the next bay is Chaluuknax^.

RH: That's where Zharoff's had a camp?

NG: Um hmm. Bill Zharoff camp used to be. . . . Then next bay is Agamgix^.

RH: Agamgix^. That's a pretty bay.

NG: Yeah, . . . that's a good place. Low tide sand bar stick out right in the middle.

Goddamn, we used to dig clams there. And the Deep Bay is called Chamax^.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Chamax^ has no landing there when the wind pick up, southeast wind, That's a way outside point. Big salmon berries. Big creek there. Before the war, I stopped there. Me and Andrew Makarin, Peter Lukanin. We ate some dry fish, outside one time. Somebody leave those long knives. Can't rusted up. We leave them there. We forgot all about it. Then after the war when we come back, we find that knife! Candy find that knife. Right in the creek. But handle fox chew 'em up. Because they smelled dry fish, I guess.

RH: Now Candy, what was Candy's name.

NG: Akeefa.

RH: Akeefa.

NG: Kenny, I think. That the guy shot himself.

RH: Oh.

NG: Shot top of his head. . . .

RH: Where did Leonty Merculief—Helen, his mother, came from St. Paul?

NG: I think so, yeah.

RH: And his dad was from here or?

NG: No, from Akutan.

RH: From Akutan, ah. Okay.

NG: And that name is not really Akutan. . . . Sea otter hunters named that Akutan.

When they're coming from that mainland, between mainland, and they find it.

Akuntanax^. They say that it Aleut. Ever since they called it Akuntanax^. "Akun" is "over there."

RH: Ah.

NG: Maybe Americans hear them so they call it Akutan.

RH: Yeah. Ah.

NG: Yeah, them sea otter hunters come and name it Akutanax^ . . .

RH: Now, did you ever go into English Bay.

NG: English Bay. Where's English Bay?

RH: You know, out past Kalekta, at the head of, at the mouth of—

NG: Oh, yeah, yeah. I been all around. I been walking all around. . . down on the beach.

RH: Oh, really.

NG: Me and Coco [Yatchmenoff]. But not all the way, but half way.

RH: Yeah? What's on the south side?

NG: There's a good bank on the south side, you can walk right edge of it. We went over there by that Chaluuknax^, got on the beach and started to go around and come out by [across from] that Sisek Bay, but Cocoa gittin' tired. Can't do nothing. But I got a half a sandwich on me, so I let him eat half a sandwich. Boy, I hear him, he got home and went to bed. I was tired but I wasn't that tired.

RH: Now, on the Pacific side, do they have good beaches over there. On the Pacific side?

NG: What's that?

RH: Any good beaches? [I had not made clear that I was asking about the south side of Sedanak Island and Nick continued explaining about the bays on the north side of Beaver Inlet.]

NG: Not really. That Chamax^ has got a good beach there, nothing but sand. Sand beach.

RH: Is that the first one?

NG: The first one is coming in from the bay. The next one is Agamgix^. This is a good place. It's got an army camp there. You know 'em.

RH: Oh, yeah. Right, right. In Beaver Inlet.

NG: You camped there. The next one is Chaluuknax^. That's another sandy beach.

RH: They have red salmon there.

NG: Um hmm. Lot of humpies, silvers. And that next bay is, ah—

RH: Ugadaga?

NG: Um hmm. Ugadaga. And that other bay, I don't know.

RH: They say—

NG: It's got names but I don't know the names.

RH: Yeah. On the map it's Small Bay, but—

NG: They've got army camp there. [Nick is referring to Uniktali Bay, not Small Bay]

RH: Ah.

NG: Goddamn a big army kitchen and hut housing. Goddamned big snow rolled from that high hill and hit that big goddamned kitchen, through and through, both ends. . . . That other bay I can't understand it. From Agamgix^ . Tanasxan.

RH: That's a deep one.

NG: Yeah. There are three islands inside it, I guess. Used to be a lot of sea gull islands there. In the war time, all the sea gulls go away.

RH: Oh, yeah?

NG: You know why?

RH: Why?

NG: Japanese digging holes there, dig underground, tunnels. Same thing with that one called , one island, used to have a name, used to have a lot of . . . sea gull eggs. No. Nothing there, too. I was on there looking for sea gull eggs. Found an underground house there, Japanese. . . . that's why sea gulls left that island, moved into. . . Duxsxn Island. Jesus Christ, nothing but sea gulls there now.

RH: Yeah, and that's a tiny island.

NG: I used to camp there with Ruff [Ermeloff]. Last time 1956. I was seal hunting with Paul Merchenin.

RH: Yeah.

NG: We got a hundred seals that time, yeah. We used to camp on that island. In the same house. Goddamned, still good. 1950—yeah, 1956-57, I think, when I was over there. Goddamned, housing hanging over the cliff! Ruff cable it—used cable on it in case it blowed away. It did blowed away, hanged up! [Laughs]

RH: Did he build the cabin there?

NG: Yeah. We didn't, but Ruff did.

RH: Yeah, yeah, Ruff did.

NG: He used to have a house down below.

RH: Ah.

NG: But too far from the water. But water on the side of it.

RH: That would be a long place to carry lumber to.

NG: Yeah, but he got lumber from that bay you're talking about, next to Ugadaga.

RH: Yeah. Oh, where the army camp was. Okay.

NG: You can walk. If you go up this way [gesturing toward Captains Bay and the route up through Pyramid Valley], you can go in it.

RH: Yeah.

NG: If you go this way [gesturing up Unalaska Valley], that's Ugadaga Bay.

RH: Right. Okay. I've only been down in Uniktali Bay once . . . .

NG: I've been through there. Road all the way around there that goes to Summer Bay. I did that once, twice, I think, John driving.

RH: I don't know if that road is open now or not.

NG: Yeah, but just about gone 'cus both sides got slides and the road is still good but not wide enough.

RH: Yeah, there are some washouts. There were anyway.

NG: You could slide down, yeah. By god, if you build a road you've got to use big rocks to fill both sides up.

RH: Did you ever go out to Egg Island, out past Sedanka?

NG: . . . . Biorka village is right here but way out there is that island, another island, tall island. That's the one called Old Man Rock.

RH: Ah, okay.

NG: Used to have one cabin there, but you can't go on the beach. That little place is open, about as long as this house, gravel. Big rocks there, not easy to walk on. Somebody built that cabin there. Water running from up there. I don't know how it is that water's running. Got a small lake on top there.

RH: Yeah, it shows that here. Here it's actually calling it Egg Island and it shows a little, a little lake there. . . . .

NG: Yeah, you got nothing but them birds always go together, them big ones, big wild ones. Laying eggs right on that island. Them sea gull eggs pretty close to the water but you have to go get them. But good landing, you can, we used to shoot seals, sea lions, on that there, unload a couple guys.

RH: Yeah.

NG: We used to be out, anchor out, not anchor but stay outside and wait for them when they cut it all up, tie a rope on them seals and cut the meats, and throw them in the bay



and we go and get it and pull that meats out into the boat. Goddamned, too rough. The only place you can land used to be a cabin there.

RH: Who built the cabin?

NG: I don't know who.

RH: It was a long time ago.

NG: Long time ago.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: But Unalga Island, one outside, little inside before that mainland, main island, John Yatchmenef used to be have a—

RH: Ah, one of the Baby Islands?

NG: Um hmm, Baby Islands, yeah. Well, I didn't know John Yatchmenef. Andrew Makarin told me John Yatchmenef used to have blue foxes there. And that other island didn't have no fox go on there 'cause birds have nesting there. And from there that mainland, main island, on this side of it is—what the hell's its name? I forgot the name.

RH: Ah, not Unalga, ah—

NG: Unalg^an. Unalg^an. I think.

RH: Okay. One of the Baby Islands?

NG: The big one [i.e. Unalga Island].

RH: The Baby Island, the names of the Baby Islands in English are very strange. I don't know where they got them.

NG: There is blue fox on that. Patterson owned that island for a while, kept fox on it.

RH: Unalga Island?

NG: Um hmm. And John Yatchmenef was a little bit east side of it, another island. There's four islands there but them other ones got nothing on it, way outside of it, high ones. Akutan people used to, when come on this side, used to go there. Army camp there on that big island. Got a cove. Lot of gas. Akutan people take it to Akutan. Come and fill the bags up, load a drum.

RH: I want to ask you a question about Makushin. Between Makushin and Volcano Bay, when people walked there, ah, what side of the lake would they go on? Or, how would they walk from Makushin to Volcano Bay?

NG: Ah, you go on the left side only. Left side, two lakes all the way down. Used to be a trail there all the way. From all the people lived way before me making trails.

RH: And would you stay close to the lake or would you go up higher?

NG: Oh, not high. Just about, ah, about 20 feet high, that's all. You go by the lake.

RH: Hmm. Okay.

NG: But you can't walk on the beach. Goddamned, too rough, rocks, slippery.

Way long time ago, that's what I hear, people used to take care of his baidarky there. Far as that Agiis Bay, go through there and from there take a baidarky all the way to Volcano Bay. But you got to cut through two lakes, though.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: Middle is goddamned crazy creek there.

RH: Oh, yeah, right in between the two lakes?

NG: . . . [Laughs] Yeah, I know. People used to go there. Pack some wood off the beach and load the baidarky up and go to Makushin again. That place is—used to pull baidarkies on a seal skin, winter time.

RH: Um hmm.

NG: I used to go there. But it's not really far. And that used to be my fishing ground anyway, that place. Small creek. Use homemade hook and fishing for trouts. Used to be a lot of fun.

RH: Now in Humback Bay there's quite a big river going down into Humback Bay. Was that a salmon stream?

NG: Oh, yeah, every creek salmon. There're three creeks running there from that last lake on Makushin side.

RH: Um hmm

NG: All salmon creeks. That's why the other lake from Volcano Bay—

RH: Yeah.

NG: The fish go through there, that's all. It's funny. The fish don't stop there. Got three creeks right in that second one. One smaller one, that's the one people used to go launch his baidarky to Volcano Bay. I don't think I could go through that creek. I look at it a lot of times. Crooked creek. *Qitukagaangax*. People used to name that *Qitukagaangax*.

RH: What did they call Anderson Bay?

NG: . . . . Anderson Bay was Makushin Cannery, end of it is Makushin Cannery.  
Makushin Cannery was a Bristol Bay cannery now.

RH: That didn't operate for very long, I don't think, right?

NG: No. That's got Chinese and Japanese that's all that's working there. No  
Americans, no Aleuts. Their boats bring salmon all the way up from Bristol Bay to go

there. But little bit too far for them. 'Cause the fishermen out there waiting for boats to come in, but all on this side. So started building cannery in Bristol Bay and when they finished, they take everything out. That's what I hear.

RH: That's what I've heard, too. I guess there are ruins, a couple of buildings left, but all the canning equipment they took up to Bristol Bay.

NG: Goddamned big warehouse there, I know that. That time, my dad sometime take me there couple times. Look at fishermen. He told me to watch Chinese. "*Kitaayichax*^, *Kitaayichax*^ *amgix*^*talix*." *Kitaayichax*^ is Chinese. After lunch, goddamned long goddamned pipe, get it out and put it between two nails and take a couple puffs and shut up. Boy, that's the way all of them do that. Mostly them older people. And it's time to work, got up and hit its pipe and put 'em away and started working. Them days, it's a good weather anyways. Nowadays, we don't have them kinds of weathers.

RH: You think the weather's getting worse?

NG: Oh, yeah, yeah. After Second World War Two believe it or not. After Second World War Two. We got a 130 mile an hour wind here.

RH: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Even stronger, I think, at times, yeah.

NG: 173 one time. Two or three boats landing up here on the beach. . . .

RH: Now in Anderson Bay there's that island, Peter Island? In Anderson Bay they show this island—

NG: Yeah. They got three islands there.

RH: Oh, yeah, right. You're right.

NG: . . . . Used to be good egg islands. . . . From Makushin Village if you look out there, rocks there—

RH: Oh, yeah, Cathedral Rocks.

NG: Called them *Unglun*. Named them *Unglun*. *Qadamungludan* people used to say that. That one high rock, look like Priest Rock, on west side, people used to call them *Chuchxumax*. Could you say that?

RH: *Chu-chuu-max.*

NG: Chuchxumax. One on Makushin side, real low tide used to be stick out about four or five feet long and about three feet wide, my dad start calling *Udg^inux^*, because it stinks all the time. [Laughs] The shags go in there and go bathroom. Ah, my dad start calling it *Udg^inux^*. Well before that people I guess name it *Udg^inux^*. And in that, from next to there Pumicestone Bay between Kashega and Makushin.

RH: That's a very deep bay. [Telephone rings.]

NG: Answer that, please.

RH: Nicky's going to do that.

NG: Oh.

RH: Here, I can stop this, or hit a pause.

NG: I didn't know Nicky's here.

[Pause and then the recording starts again.]

NG: Good silver salmon or, I mean, dog salmon bay.

RH: In Pumicestone?

NG: Ah ha. . . That's my grandfather's hunting ground.

RH: Pumicestone or—

NG: Pumicestone Bay. Well, this time of year, . . . it's got a lot of dog salmon.

Sometime a dory go there and load up and take it right into Makushin. Yeah, I remember that from there to Kashega. That Kashega people used to be in Makushin. [Unclear]

RH: Now, say that again?

NG: George Borenin. He used to be in Makushin.

RH: Uh huh.

NG: That's why one of his man got married from Makushin. Peter Yatchmenoff.

RH: Oh, yeah, yeah.

NG: He bring his body here and my mom's sister, too. From, southward. They buried him pretty close to the road. But they're going to build something there, I guess, but two of them are pretty close, so dig them out. Told them which way they go, but somebody in Unalaska say bring him in. His wife's named Natalia. His husband's Peter, Peter Yatchmenoff.

RH: Peter Yatchmenoff, huh.

NG: Lot of Kudrins. Goddamn, all of them died in Akutan. . . .

RH: . . . There are so many bays on this island. It's really amazing. Kuliliak Bay.

NG: Some good, some you don't. You can't find a better place on this side, summertime or wintertime. Too cold or too rough. Summertime you go there, goddamn mosquitoes! Run away from mosquitoes. Goddamn blue flies on the beach. I wonder where he go now. Hide away someplace.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Mostly stay under rocks.

RH: I always wondered about those bumblebees.

NG: Yeah.

RH: They're so big and I wonder where they go.

NG: *Aanasnaadan*.

RH: How do you say it?

NG: *Aanasnaadan*.

RH: *Aanasnaadan*.

NG: That bumblebee, that's *aag^umikaadax*. [blowfly] Those other ones I always call them *alixusunax^*, warships. Them little bugs. They don't fly, but they go under water. If you touch them, goddamn, lot of goddamn little ones come out! [Laughs]

RH: [Laughs]

NG: Bugs! Small, little ones! Damn little ones. I know its name. I forgot.

RH: I don't know them.

NG: Me and Ruthie [Shaishnikoff] talk about it. . . .

RH: Well, thanks, Nick. Maybe we could do one more session sometime, all in Aleut?

NG: Ah?

RH: Would that be okay?

NG: That's okay.

RH: And, ah, you can decide what you want to talk about or what you want to say. Ah, that would be good. Maybe you could tell that Lucky Charm story in Aleut.

NG: Yeah.

RH: That would be great.

NG: Lucky Charm story.

RH: It would be good to do a good recording of that. Should I come over tomorrow?

NG: Any time, I guess.

RH: All right. I'll do that and we can record that in Aleut.

NG: Way before, people no radios, no TV. So that's why that Luke tell me, somebody tell me from long time ago people. Long time ago people family stay in one family underground house. You can't stand up in it, enough to sit down. When the people go to bed then they make story themselves, report it, they talked about it. Other guys sleeping, listen to it, and go to sleep. That's what they used to do, that Luke Shelikoff up in St. Paul, telling them stories and they went to sleep. Ten dollars a night. We got to walk back for a dance next day, Sunday.

RH: That was good, that was good to do.

NG: St. Paul people never take day off except Sunday.

RH: That Luke Shelikoff must have been a good storyteller.

NG: Yeah, and that guy from St. Paul, that's a good—well, he's reading anyway, reading them Aleut books. Tell a story about it. In Makushin, three people used—four people—used to telling Aleut stories.

RH: Who were they?

NG: My dad and Matfey Borenin, another Matfey Petukoff, and my grandfather Simeon Lekanoff. Goddamned! There's no people left except me and Nick Lekanoff! [Laughs] Were three of us, for awhile. Nick Borenin, me, and Nick Lekanoff. But Nick Borenin died. Last time I went to Anchorage, he looked pretty sick.

RH: Was he living in Akutan?

NG: Yeah, he moved to Akutan. Coming back from after war?

RH: Um hm.

NG: 'Cause they didn't have enough people in Makushin that guy told them to stay there, but Nicky want to because Nick got a girlfriend. He didn't care about Elia Borenin, though. He, if anybody want to go back from here, he want to go back.

RH: Back to Makushin?

NG: Um hmm. We could, too, but I was, I was alone. My brother trying with me but my brother's way younger than me. Well, I told them other people, no. Well, maybe them guys right but I don't care for this town that time.

RH: Yeah, I'm sure it was different from, you know—

NG: Yeah.

RH: But you went over to Biorka for awhile after the war.

NG: Oh, yeah. Nine years I been over there. Most of the time summertime—I mean, winter-time.

RH: Because summertime in the Pribilofs?

NG: Yeah. Summertime chasing girls in St. Paul. [Laughs]

RH: Now the last time, the last time, when they moved away from Biorka, was that—I'm confused about the year. 1952 or 1956?

NG: Goddamn, I don't know. Maybe—I was start working for Hortman, so—

RH: Ah, okay.

NG: Pop Hortman?

RH: Yeah. Yeah.

NG: So I'd stay on this side and I think, yeah, '56, I think.

RH: Okay.

NG: And from the Biorka people come in and they want to stay in town.

RH: Irene said that it was getting harder and harder to carry groceries.

NG: Yeah.

RH: You know back, they were getting older.

NG: That's what he do, that's for sure. That's what Andrew Makarin and them others, George Yatchmenoff, all of them got packing groceries. Ruff, Peter Lukanin, Candy, me. I used to. I used to live with Peter Lukanin because my sister there. He married to my sister. My brother's there, too, most of the time, Peter. And I've got another brother up there [the cemetery], name is Paul. The one in the hospital that time the Japanese hit the hospital. My brother Paul.

RH: Oh, okay.

NG: I don't think them Japanese did tried to bomb the hospital. Trying to gun up the guns up on Haystack.

RH: That's right. Yeah, yeah.

NG: Bomb must be stuck some way.

RH: Was your brother in the hospital then, did you say?



NG: Yeah, my brother and my sister Molly and another six guys there. She did put them down in the basement, put them up in the other end. The right end, too.

RH: Wow.

NG: Then all of them could be killed. I know they didn't try to bomb it, but they—

RH: But they hit it even though they were aiming for something else.

NG: But first thing when they come in, in the morning, people still sleeping. Bombed Margaret's Bay, Army barracks. Goddamn, twenty new people just got there last night, killed them next morning, Army guys.

RH: Um hmm.

NG: Yeah, and bombed Dutch Harbor. Didn't do nothing much on this side, but machine gun bullets. Goddamn, I used to stand right behind the light post, watch the bullets! Dumb me.

RH: It was probably pretty exciting.

NG: I got—yeah! Exciting for me but I seen guys got hit on that truck. A guy named Blackie Floyd.

RH: Oh, yeah. I've heard of him. He had a bar here.

NG: Right in front [on the beach side] of that Elbow Room. Used to have it there. He got four people on that truck. He went up or go down. Goddamn, one guy hit, goddamn, fall backward. Well, I run for my life then. After Japanese left, everybody started digging for fox holes.

RH: Now, did you have a fox hole that you went to? A particular one?

NG: Hm hmm. I got one down—I made one by the creek. I didn't reach 'em, 'cause Japanese already here.

RH: Hmm.

NG: I was on dock, way down, down dock, me and John Bereskin from Akutan. He died, too, cannery. . . . fall overboard. They find his body anyway. Those people drink too much beer must be don't sink.

RH: Ah.

NG: Floating.

RH: So, was that the first day or the second day of the bombing?

NG: Second day. They bombed that oil dock and that one boat, in Captains Bay.

RH: Oh, yeah, the *Northwestern*.

NG: Hm hmm. And the Captains Bay, or the oil dock. But a bomb went right through. Goddamn, they bombed it but they didn't know nothing much about it, I guess. Because otherwise, they could dump a lot of oil. Pretty soon them oils coming down from that big tank.

RH: I guess it burned for quite a few days.

NG: Yeah. Goddamn big fire up there, that tank. Goddamn, on the beach, oil about this thick all the way.

RH: Almost a foot, wow.

NG: Goddamn, I suppose all of it went down.

RH: I never thought of that, but you're right. It would have leaked all over the place.

NG: Oil tanks, four or five tanks of oil, all over. And that place up there, dump way—  
[across the bay from the oil tanks on Amaknak Island]

RH: Yeah.

NG: It used to be nothing but blue mussels, sea eggs. All that grease all clean them all out.

RH: Wow.

NG: 'Till after the war they started building a little bit. Jesus Christ, people they don't want to go around no more afterwards. They kill only about 30-40 people, all military men.

RH: All military people, I think.

NG: But I hear two guys by that oil dock, oil tanks, working. They were the only ones they didn't find. Must be threw them in the bay somewhere. Bomb.

RH: Now, was there anybody at Makushin when the bombing took place? Was anybody living over at Makushin still?

NG: No, not now.

RH: No, not now, but I mean in 1942, in the—

NG: Oh, yeah, yeah. Everybody there. Kashega people there. Kashega people in Kashega. St. Paul people in St. Paul.

RH: Who was in Makushin?

NG: Pete Olsen. His wife Tatiann. Anna, his adopted daughter [She had actually died on June 19, 1936.], and that adopted boy John Borenin. That was Nick Borenin's brother. And, ah, Nick Borenin, I mean Matfey Borenin with his wife and kids.

RH: Ah, what was his wife's name?

NG: Borenin. His name is Borenin.

RH: Ah, okay. Matfey Borenin.

NG: With his wife and three kids—two kids, Nick Borenin and— I don't think that Nick Borenin is Elia's son. But Natalia, the one Elia's daughter.

RH: So there were quite a few people at Makushin at that time, at the time of the bombing.

NG: Well, nothing bother them.

RH: No, right. Right.

NG: Biorka, too. Biorka people over there. But they see the planes fly over here.

RH: The Biorka people did.

NG: Um hmm. The Makushin people. They went in there. Nick he didn't see them either but he heard about 'em on radio.

RH: Oh, did Pete Olsen have a radio? Is that how—

NG: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, almost everybody got a radio but no TV.

RH: Oh, sure.

NG: Using by battery, radio.

RH: Um hmm.

NG: Used to be a lot of them around, but not anymore.

RH: Now Eva was telling me about Kashega. I think she got it a little bit confused because she said that, ah, the Japanese flew over Kashega and then the Army came and evacuated them on the same day. But it was a couple weeks later, I think, they were evacuated.

NG: Yeah, we been waiting two weeks.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: 'Cause that's what I hear. This place the only one got a gun and everything so got to get those other villages out first. That's what I hear.

RH: Ah, okay.

NG: But me, I don't care about it. I'm not scared or nothing. [Laughs] Well, I was fuckin' dumb. Finally we took off. We didn't even see which way we're going.

RH: Yeah.

NG: Took as all the way as far as that Jap Bay in Kodiak. Bury one little girl.

RH: Oh, yeah. Was that Helen Lekanoff's—

NG: Um hmm. Lekanoff's daughter. And from there all the way to Wrangell. Just like Army. Two Army trucks looks like on the dock. Come out and we got small thing in our hand, our luggage. Didn't have a chance to get our luggage. Got on the truck, stand up on the truck, load truck, and we went down to Institute, Wrangell Institute.

RH: Okay, all right, yeah.

NG: There was a high school there.

RH: Right, right, yeah.

NG: When I got there I thought there were Army guys on the ground. Other villages using Army tents.

RH: Oh, okay.

NG: Unalaska people, all the boys hotel and girls hotel.

RH: Okay.

NG: We been there goddamn month and a half.

RH: Yeah, before you went to—

NG: Burnett Inlet.

RH: Burnett Inlet, yeah.

NG: But boat going Burnett Inlet every day, though.

RH: But the Biorka people didn't go to Burnett Inlet, though?

NG: No. Up in Ketchikan, Ketchikan.

RH: At Ward Lake?

NG: Ward Lake, yeah. Ketchikan. They used to . . . take care of them good, too, Biorka people, Akutan people, Nikolski. Kashega people, Makushin People.

RH: All at Biorka, I mean at Ward Lake.

NG: I was visit them a couple times. Got a lot of goddamn place by the lake, about eight or ten miles from Anchorage.

RH: No, from Ketchikan.

NG: Um hmm. Ketchikan, yeah. Bus go there a couple times a day. Taxis running. . . . I used to see a lot of people drunk. I just went there. My girlfriend want me so I got there but I was late. My girlfriend died.

RH: Ah.

NG: Irene Sovoroff. Sergie Sovoroff—you know Sergie Sovoroff—

RH: Yeah.

NG: That's his daughter. Goddamn, mail boat didn't go there. Finally, got mail boat got there so I went out on the mail boat and I got there. Well, I asked that Irene, my wife—I didn't know she was going to be my wife—he come to me, tell me, "I know you're looking for something." And after awhile she said, "She's gone." Goddamn, it hurt me. Four days after they buried her, I got there.

RH: Wow. Wow.

NG: I got there.

RH: Wow.

NG: That other Irene's, that's from Biorka.

RH: Yeah.

NG: That's the one I was married to. Maybe that's what I was after, why I went there!

[Laughs]

RH: [Laughs] Always Irene! Yeah. Well, thanks. Thanks, Nick. I'm going to give you a break, but I'll come back tomorrow and maybe we'll do just an Aleut recording. Okay?

NG: Okay-dokay.

RH: And that will be good. Let me see if I can figure out how to stop it.



## 8. Irene Makarin

June 6, 2004

[This tape begins with checking the microphone and a reading of the Oral History Release Agreement.]

Ray Hudson: Today is June 6, 2004. Talking with Irene Makarin. . . . [I read the agreement. We talk about the number of copies of the tape Irene would like to have. She signs the agreement and says:]

Irene Makarin: I never go to school.

RH: They didn't have a school when you were young?

IM: No. Nothing in there. No school or nothing in there.

RH: Now, Irene, let's start with some basic things. When were you born?

IM: I born 1930.

RH: 1930.

IM: April 28<sup>th</sup>.

RH: April 18<sup>th</sup>. I'm April 24<sup>th</sup>.

IM: And my ex-husband born 1925.

RH: Ah. Coco?

IM: April 1925.

RH: And where were you born?

IM: I born here. And Coco born—I'm sorry, they called him Coco—

RH: Yeah, Coco. I know him.

IM: She born from Kashega, Makushin, I think. Kashega.

RH: He was a Yatchmenoff, right?

IM: George Yatchmenoff's first son. Then after first wife passed away he moved to Biorka and he married to Elsie Ermeloff. That's Coco's second mother. Fede

Yatchmenoff, then Margaret Yatchmenoff—that's Coco's step-brother and step-sister. They were born here. Their dad is from Makushin, no, from Biorka. Her mom was from Makushin, I guess. I don't think they know that.

RH: And where were your parents from? [Throughout this interview Irene had difficulty hearing my questions.]

IM: They had a war in here, 1942.

RH: Ah.

IM: And Biorka people, they don't know nothing. They have no war. The men come in here to get groceries. All the way up there, all the way down there, and all over on other side, [the pass from Ugadaga Bay over the ridge and into Unalaska Valley] nothing but armies. My dad, Andrew Makarin, and George Yatchmenoff and Anna Merculieff's daddy, Ruff Ermeloff, and Candy, Candy Ermeloff. They come in here to get groceries. In June or July—June, I think.

RH: Yes, June. June.

IM: Then they come in here. They are going to get groceries because they had groceries [here]. Then they come in here and they get caught on other side [in Ugadaga Bay]. They [the military] thought they Japanese.

RH: Oh.

IM: The only one, Candy Ermeloff, the only one could speak English good. The rest of them, they don't speak English. They understand. They tried to speak English; and they had a hard time to speak English, you know. Then it took us about two weeks to go [back] to Biorka because they're really strict.

RH: Yeah.

IM: [Unclear] This place is nothing but armies, that's all. Then two days, I think it was about a week to go home to Biorka.

RH: Then they brought you the news about—

IM: Yeah. Just the chief, Alec Ermeloff, that's from Biorka chief, the only one that stay with us: Nick Galaktionoff, Coco—his name is William; they called him "Coco"—

RH: Yes, right.

IM: —my ex-husband, and then—Nick Galaktionoff, he was adopted for a while by Andrew Makarin—then his sister Marina Shapsnikoff, his sister married to—



RH: Oh, is that Molly Lukanin?

IM: Oh, yeah.

RH: Molly was married to—

IM: That's Moses' mom.

RH: Oh, yes.

IM: Moses Gordieff's mom. His dad is name is that Peter Lukanin. That's from Biorka. They come in here. They got married. Then they went to Biorka. They moved to Biorka. Moses mom. Then Peter Lukanin. They're in Biorka after they got married. Then after they had the Moses—I don't know what year Moses was born—1930 something. I don't even know. Then her husband Peter Lukanin beating his wife too much then that's why they talked to Chief Ermeloff from Biorka. Moses about five or maybe two months, one years old. And they brought him in, his mom and my dad and Alec Ermeloff. They brought him in here. They asked Maria Makarin, they asked if she could adopt that baby. And she said yeah.

RH: That was nice.

IM: After they gave her the baby they went back to Borka. His mom's name is Molly. They go back to Borka. And in the summer time, all the men go back to Borka, you know. Then all the kids, me, Marina, Margaret, Fede, and Anna Ermeloff—they're kids. Coco and Nick, they're older than us, you know. They used to beat us up! And they're playing outside. They never seen that airplane before [in] all their life, you know. They're playing outside. A bunch of round things come around to the Borka. They don't even know they're Japanese! They come to the Borka. All the kids that are playing outside, they're standing there, waiving at them. They [the pilots] think they are—probably they think they are Japanese. [Laughs] They don't bother us, just past the Borka. They go around that lake over there. They go around and they come back and they're really low. All the kids are standing up, waiving at them. They were waiving at us, too.

RH; Wow, they were waiving at you, too?

IM: Yeah. Good thing they don't bother us. Because nothing in there. No lights or nothing. Used the lamps, you know. After Biorka, after the people went back to Biorka they were talked to the chief, Alec Ermeloff. He told him, Peter, Peter Lukanin and

Candy Ermeloff, they talked to Alec Ermeloff that they bombing Dutch Harbor. Pretty soon they're going to—Army boat going to Biorka and they're going to bring us up. Kids don't know nothing. They don't know nothing. They're playing outside.

This month, 12th, they're making dry fish. Lots of them, lots of fish and they brought the fish and all the woman were going to make dry fish. When they're making dry fish, they hang them outside. Then that night, me, I don't even know what time but it was getting a little bit dark out, you know, then my daddy came out from that house. They're army people. They wonder who they [are] coming to Biorka. Then Candy Ermeloff came out and my dad is out. They talk to this army person. He told everybody to pack his stuff so they are going to bring us over. All the kids, they don't know nothing. Even me, I don't know nothing, you know. Then daddy went inside and talked to his wife in Aleut. Me, I just stood there looking at my dad and my daddy turned around. He told me to pack my clothes, in Aleut. I said, Okay. I have no suitcase or nothing, you know. Then they give me box or a flour bag, used them a long time ago. Put my clothes in there, put all my stuff on the box and getting dark out. Then there was three mens. They're over my daddy's house. They're the armies. They're waiting for us, waited for all of us Aleut people to go down the beach. And it's getting dark out, little bit getting dark out. Everybody they go in the skiff. And then they took us over to a army boat, too small, about as long as this one [the room], I guess. Holy Smoke, they left—all the Biorka people they left a lot of stuff. My mom and dad used to have a chicken, dogs and cats, everything. They left a lot of good stuff in their houses. And they're making dried fish and they just leave it like that. I think they brought us in at midnight. And then they took us over to the dock over there.

RH: Yeah, at Standard Oil.

IM: Yeah. Then all the kids are sleeping and they wake us up, you know. They took all the men and put them on a really big big boat. That's what they called the *Columbia*. That's how they took us to Southeast.

Then they wake us up and they put us down the dock and the army's there in a line, they're watching us. They're helping those old people in. Me, I'm just crying. I want my daddy, you know. Couldn't see my daddy. Then they brought us on a big big ship right there. It was just dark and they took us downstairs. Then they gave us our

room, one just like this [her room at the Unalaska Senior Center]. Just like all those Biorka womans and the kids, that's all.

RH: All in one room.

IM: Then the men they got their own room. Just the boys, that's all.

RH: Did they have beds or bunks?

IM: Then they had a watchman by the door. 'Cause kids like to go out there and play, that's why. That can't go home, you know. Then they brought us in June 12<sup>th</sup> and they left from in here June 13, midnight. I never ride on a big ship but they did, you know. I was just crying and I want my dad. Mama get mad at me. Somebody go out and I go out and looking for my dad and can't find him. Then a big guy come over and picked me up. I said, "I want my dad. I want my daddy." Mama gets mad at me. Finally, I don't know how many days they took us to Southeast on that big ship.

RH: Yeah, that's a long ways.

IM: They never go out or anything, just stay in their room because they don't trust those Japanese, that's why. Just the men, they outside, they watch, help those army watching, you know, watchmen.

RH: The Biorka men, the Biorka men were watchmen.

IM: Yeah. To go to Southeast. The next day, mama, daddy, and Alec Ermeloff, George Yatchmenoff, Ruff Ermeloff, they went to their wives's bedroom, you know, and they told his wife and kids to get up there, we're going to eat the breakfast. I never see a beautiful breakfast before. No. If I'd get up in the morning I'd just have boiled fish for breakfast. Then all those husbands took his wife and took her downstairs. We went downstairs and long tables, just a full one. And daddy sat right here and my mama sat right here and me, I sit right there. All the Biorka people they got one table, you know. All the kids, they don't know nothing about the breakfast.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

IM: I don't either. Mama eating. My daddy told me to eat, I wouldn't eat anything. I never see cereal before, you know. All the foods right there, I never seen anything like that.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

IM: They tried to let me eat, I wouldn't eat anything! Just cry! My daddy come over. "You better eat something." He talked Aleut to me. I turned around and told my dad, "I want my fish, boiled fish!" [Laughs] "So you can't have boiled fish. You got to eat." I wouldn't eat. He have a hard time. All the Biorka kids, they have a hard time to eat breakfast.

RH: Yeah.

IM: Then noon time, twelve o'clock, he took us down there and all the kids, they don't eat. [Laughs]

RH: Getting pretty hungry.

IM: Because they don't know. They never seen the good food before. They are growing up on Native food, that's why. It was really pretty hard for us, you know.

RH: Yeah. Yeah.

IM: Margaret, Marina, and Nick Galaktionoff, I mean, I forgot Irene Ermeloff, used to be married to Nick Galaktionoff, that's from Biorka. She died; I forgot what year.

RH: A while ago, yeah.

IM: She died. All the Biorka peoples and the kids, the kids are still alive, though. All the mens they died in here. They're all of them, they're way up there.

RH: The cemetery here.

IM: My daddy, Andrew Makarin, he passed away. . . .They put him by the church-house because he's a reader in church-house. And Alec Ermeloff is reader for church-house. He's by that church-house, too. And all the rest of them, mens and womans, they are up here.

RH: Up here in the cemetery. Now—

IM: My mama's up there.

RH: What was your mama's name?

IM: Uh?

RH: What was your mom's name?

IM: Ester.

RH: Ester.

IM: Makarin. Yeah. That old lady?

RH: Yes. Yes.

IM: That's my daddy's first wife. Mama's first husband, my dad.

RH: But Andrew's wife—

IM: That's what I said. Ester.

RH: Ah, okay.

IM: They adopt me. I was two years old. My mama died. I was about two years old. I don't even know my mama. I have three sisters. I don't even know them.

RH: So you were the only child with Andrew and—

IM: Yeah. Andrew and his wife came in here and they asked my really dad, Mike Borenin. They asked my dad if they could adopt me. My daddy said, "Yeah, I guess."

RH: Yeah.

IM: Gee, cry, huh?

RH: Yeah. When you were in Southeastern and then you came back and when you came back from Southeastern, I understand that they dropped the Biorka people off at Akutan?

IM: Yeah. They come back 1945. That's why they had us coming on that, ah, I forgot the name of the big ship.

RH: Yes, I don't know either.

IM: They came on an army boat. I forgot the name. And they brought us in here. No, they stopped by Akutan. 1945. That's why they drop us in there. I had just turned to fifteen years old in April. I know they have a big service on the big army boat, Easter. And they took us over there and dropped us over there. Then my daddy and the Biorka [people] from Biorka they stayed there with his wife. The rest of them they came in here, I guess, and stayed 'till they fix up Biorka.

RH: Yes. Yes.

IM: My daddy, Andrew Makarin, his wife and I stayed in Akutan for almost a year, I guess, stay in that Akutan after World War Two. Then they came over, my daddy and his wife and Candy came over. And Andrew Makarin stayed with his brother, Elia Makarin. He used to have a house over down there, that's where that Rendezvous is there. I think it's Rendezvous.

RH: Yeah, yeah.

IM: My daddy talked to Alice, I mean, Paul Tutiakoff and his wife to move to Biorka. I think my daddy moved to Biorka and all the Biorka people they moved to Biorka 1946.

They're okay, I guess, all the houses are okay. They stealing lot of stuff, though, from in there.

RH: The army stole a lot of stuff?

IM: Yeah. They moved to Biorka in 1946. Summertime, I guess. Just like this. Summertime. Then all the mans go to St. Paul for hair seal hunting. Working over there.

RH: Fur seal hunting.

IM: Yeah, hair seal. They stay there 'till September, 'til the season is over at St. Paul.

RH: Umhmm.

IM: And all the womans they come in here waiting for their husbands to come home.

RH: They come to Unalaska during the summer?

IM: Umhmm.

RH: And wait here?

IM: Yeah. After they come home in September, then all of us go back to Biorka again. Yeah.

RH: And then would they trap fox in the wintertime over there?

IM: Huh?

RH: Would they trap fox? in the winter time, over in Biorka?

IM: Ah, I got married 1947. I was 17 years old. Coco and I they don't know nothing. Coco don't even bother me and I don't even bother him. He lived in the Biorka and I don't even know him. . . .

RH: Irene, here's a picture of the church at Biorka. [Photograph in Simeon Oliver and Peter Hatch's *Back to the Smoky Sea*.]

IM: Oh, yeah. That's pretty! Wow! That's nice. That's beautiful. It's beautiful.

RH: It is. What was it like inside?

IM: Inside? You don't got that inside picture?

RH: No, I don't. Maybe you can tell me what it was like.

IM: Ah, wow. It was really pretty. Just beautiful inside.

RH: Hmm. And your father was the reader there?

IM: Yeah. My father Andrew Makarin and Ruff Ermeloff.

RH: Ruff Ermeloff or Alec Ermeloff?

IM: Ruff Ermeloff. That's Alec Ermeloff's son.

RH: Ah.

IM: That's Anna Mercurieff's father.

RH: Father. Yes.

IM: And Alec Ermeloff is Anna Mercurieff's grandpa.

RH: Okay, yeah, yeah. What was the name of the church?

IM: I don't know! [laughs]

RH: I don't either! It's written down someplace.

IM: They used to call 'em *Sedanka kamgaa ulax*^, Biorka church house. That's what they called them in Aleut. *Sedanka kamgaa ulax*^.

RH: Sedanka for Biorka.

IM: Yeah. I think it has a name. I don't know it.

RH: That's okay. There's another picture in here. Let me see if I can find it. These are pictures from *Back to the Smoky Sea*. I think. It's a pretty small picture of Biorka Village.

IM: Oh, yeah.

RH: Now can you, ah—

IM: This is other side.

RH: Oh, from the other side. Is this a lake?

IM: This is a lake right here. This is Biorka over there.

RH: Yes. Right. And which are these—

IM: Never have much light here. [She turns additional lights on.]

RH: Okay. Great. And it's not that good a picture, but it's pretty good. Now can you tell me which houses these are?

IM: This is Biorka over there now. Yeah. This is lake right there.

RH: Okay.

IM: They got no house. They used to have a house over here.

RH: Whose house was this? [Far right]

IM: This is Biorka church house. [1]

RH: Okay.

IM: This one [immediate left of church] is my daddy Andrew Makarin's house. [2]





RH: Okay, right next to the church.

IM: And this one is Alec Ermeloff's church house—I mean, Alec Ermeloff's house.

RH: That's the dark one right in the center. [3]

IM: And George Yatchmenoff's house is right there.

RH: Okay, that's the next one. [4]

IM: Then, over here, Alec Ermeloff's house over here. [5]

RH: Hmm?

IM: I think they had only five houses. Then Peter got married, then they got a house right here.

RH: Oh, right in between your father's and the next one, closer to the lake?

IM: Yeah.

RH: Well, they say this [a photo of a barabara and drying rack below the Biorka Village photograph] is at Unalaska, but I don't know where it is. It just says it's a barabara and a fish rack. This was the only one of Biorka I've seen and it's nice.

IM: Yeah, the lake over here, a long one.

RH: And this must be like a fish rack or something over here.

IM: Oh, yeah. This one is Peter Lukanin's house, I guess.

RH: Oh.

IM: It's really small. Smaller than our Biorka house.

RH: Oh, yeah.

IM: Just him and his wife, they livin' there, that's all. Then after they moved here from Biorka, Andrew Makarin, Alec Ermeloff, George Yatchmenoff, and Ruff Ermeloff, Peter Luakanin and Candy Ermeloff, they moved here 1952. 'Cause they couldn't take that, can't help that stuff no more.

RH: They would carry food all the way up—

IM: Yeah.

RH: Up from Unalaska.

IM: Mostly all the men, they're getting old. They can't carry their groceries on their backs no more.

RH: Weren't there any young men?

IM: [Laughs] Only one, the young one, was, just Coco. [Laughs] He was the only young one. Then Peter and, ah, Peter Lukanin and Alec, Candy Ermeloff, they're the only ones from Biorka. I guess they were 50-something or 60-something. I think they died here. All of them died here.

RH: And they were too old to carry the food all that way.

IM: Yeah. Me, after I got married in 1947, then I stayed with my daddy for a month and a half. He wanted me to go back to my husband. I always say, "I'm not married." I don't know what that "married" means. I told him, "No. I'm going to stay here."

[Laughs] Then George Yatchemenoff's adopted son came to my daddy's house. They talked in Aleut, you know. They don't speak English. They talk in Aleut. I heard them talking and I heard George Yatchemenoff say, "My son is married—" talk in Aleut, you know — talk to my daddy Andrew Makarin. "Why don't you let your daughter go back to her husband?" He'd talk Aleut. He asked my dad, "Why don't you let your daughter go back to his husband? My poor son is married. He don't look like he's married." I don't know what they're talking about. Then nothing I have, my daddy's talking to me. He took me over to George Yatchemenoff's house. Then Elsie was there; then her son, Willie Yatchemenoff, was there. That Willie. I just snubbed him. I never liked him. Then George Yatchemenoff asked me, "Why don't you go back to my son? You're married to him?" I turned around and I said, "I'm not married! I'll stay with my daddy." [Laughs]

Then daddy talked to me, "That's your husband. You'd better go back." I told daddy, "I'm not married. That's not my husband. I want to stay with you, dad." Talking Aleut to my dad. He had a hard time. I stayed with him, instead of my husband.

[Laughs]

Then finally the next day—evening, afternoon—George and Alec Ermeloff and my husband Coco [Laughs] they came over to my dad's. They're talking to my dad and my dad is like, "I keep talking to my daughter. She don't want to be married." Talking to me. Alec Ermeloff, he talked to me. I was 17 years old. I told Alec Ermeloff because I don't speak English, all the Biorka people, only one, Candy, speaking English. My mama Ester Makarin, she could understand some words, you know. And I told Alec, "I'm not going to go out from my daddy's house. I stay with my dad. I stay with my mom." Then Alec Ermeloff said, "You're married." In Aleut they call me Irina. That's

Irene. In Aleut, “Irena, you’re married.” “No. I’m not married. I’ll stay with my mom and dad.” Because daddy’s packing my clothes, I was standing there crying! [Laughs] That’s because I don’t want to leave my mom and dad, you know.

Then daddy and mama took me over to aunty’s house. They had only one room in aunty’s house, the living room. They got living room bigger than this one. Then they got a bed in there. Boy, I got scared. I wouldn’t go to bed. Coco went to bed. Elsie Yatchemenoff went to bed and his husband went to bed. Margaret and kids went under the table and playing, you know. I heard George Yatchmenoff got up and he talked to the kids in Aleut, “It’s time to go to bed.” He looked at me. He told me, in Aleut he told me to go to bed with my husband. “What does that mean, husband?” Because they never told me what, that’s why.

RH: Yeah, yeah. O my goodness.

IM: In Aleut they say *chixtikux*, you’re married. You’re married to Coco. In Aleut they told me, “Vasilli, that’s your husband.” Willie. [Laughs] I’m too scared. I won’t go to bed.

RH: Wow.

IM: I stayed in that kitchen. Table right there; window right there. I sit down in a chair, wearing my coat and everything. Finally George Yatchmenoff got up and he told me to go to bed with his boy. I said, “No. I’m going to go home. I want to go home.” She went to bedroom. The outside door locked, you know. I put my shoes on out in the hallway, looking for the lock to open the door. I don’t even know what time it is. I run over to my dad’s. Asking for my dad and crying. Knock on the door. I don’t know what time it is. My daddy open the door. “I want to go in my bedroom, daddy!” [Laughs] They let me go in my bedroom that night. Ah, it took me almost a month before—

RH: Before you became his wife. Yeah. Wow.

IM: That long time people were really strict.

RH: Tell me about your mother because I remember meeting her.

IM: My really mother?

RH: No, no. Andrew’s wife. Because she was such a wonderful lady.

IM: She had a one eye. Really blind. She was a really good old lady. [Irene goes to look for a photograph.]

RH: Looking for a photograph, I think.

IM: She was one year or two years, I guess, she's older than my dad, Andrew Makarin. My mom was from Akutan. Before she got married to my daddy Andrew Makarin, she was a Sovoroff.

RH: Sovoroff. From Akutan.

IM: I don't even know them. I was not even born then.

RH: Right, right. How did she go blind?

IM: After they got married then they went to the Biorka, I guess. Because my daddy, these guys used to [be] making home brew at Biorka, long time people. Then daddy was over there drinking, I guess, and my mama Ester drinking with him, drinking over there. She woke up and started screaming and hollering, looking for his husband. And some guy from Biorka, he woke up and he heard that woman holler. Then my daddy was home sleeping, I guess. That guy he got mad at my mom and he opened the door and lift her up and opened the door and throw her out. She fall off on a pile of wood. That's why she got a wood inside.

RH: The eye was blinded that way.

IM: Then they brought her to here and took it off. That's what my daddy used to tell me.

RH: So could she see in one eye?

IM: Just the left side. Right side, I guess. No, left side. She could see on the one side.

RH: A little bit.

IM: Then she got really blind. She can't see nothing no more. But she could see a little bit after they adopted me. I guess, going to adopt me.

RH: But she used to do lots of things. She used to sew.

IM: Oh, she used to make a dress for me, used to make me dress. Then they got a sewing machine. They used that one. The Biorka people all used that one. Sewing machine. Then after they come back from the war, they lost this sewing machine. Never find it.

RH: That was lost during the evacuation.

IM: All the Biorka people used a sewing machines. They don't use that electric one.

RH: Right, it was all a hand machine.

IM: Yeah. They have a long-time record. [Laughs]

RH: Yeah. I know, my mama would start drinking and she wants to listen to this song and puts the record on and, “How can they do that?”

RH: And turn the phonograph wheel.

IM: Turn that thing and start.

RH: So you thought Biorka was a good place to grow up?

IM: After they come back from the war they lost everything in the Biorka. They couldn't find anything. Yeah. Akutan people and Nikolski people and people from way out they go to the Biorka and took all the good stuff. After they went to Biorka, they never have anything.

RH: Was Biorka a good place to get salmon berries and blue berries in the summertime?

IM: Oh, my golley, they got lots. They got big blue berries and big salmon berries, moss berries. All over Biorka. Holy Smokes.

RH: Yeah.

IM: I like to go over there in the summer time for berries, you know. And they got lots of silvers. This is Biorka right here and on the other side—

RH: The north side.

IM: —the other side, they call 'em. They changed this. This is the Biorka. It's not a Biorka. That other side, you go out the other side, what they call 'em Biorka. This one is *Borka*. Then they changed it.

RH: Ah, so the new one is *Borka* and the old one is Biorka.

IM: That old one, the long time people used to live in the other side long time ago. Then people grow up in Biorka and I guess they couldn't stand there another Biorka that's why they moved here. This is really *Borka* and the other side is Biorka. They tried to tell me this is Biorka and I said no.

RH: *Borka*.

IM: It's a *Borka*. I told them the other side is Biorka. . . . Well, I never talk about our home town.

RH: Where did you get water at?

IM: Uh?

RH: Where did you get water at, at Biorka?

IM: Oh, this water right here.

RH: On, in the lake. It's a fresh lake.

IM: Only one you could get water in there. In summer time, not enough raining and it gets dry, lake right there, it gets dry and then all the kids have to go up there and water going down.

RH: On the side of the hill—

IM: And get water there. They have to go up there and get the water for mom and dad.

RH: What did you carry it in?

IM: Oh, in a bucket!

RH: In a bucket, okay, all right, sure.

IM: People never used to let us use a big bucket. Little bucket.

RH: Little bucket, yeah.

IM: All the kids used a little bucket. [Laughs] Get the water for their mom and daddy. [Laughs] Yeah, I grew up on that. Little bucket.

RH: Did a priest ever come to Biorka? Do you remember a priest ever visited Biorka? A priest, from the church, ever go there?

IM: You mean, ah—

RH: From Unalaska.

IM: Oh, you mean to come here and get their groceries?

RH: No. Priest, you know, the priest at the church, did he ever go to Biorka?

IM: I think they brought that stuff from, some of that stuff from Biorka, 1954, I guess. Because I know my daddy had one big star. Ruff Ermeloff, he got one big star. And George Yatchmenoff, he got a small star. My daddy got a little, small star, Aleut star.

RH: Hm,mm

IM: And they brought it in here and they took it down to the church. Then, they can't find them.

RH: Ah.

IM: I keep telling those people. They know about it. They have a Biorka Russian star, you know.

RH: For Christmas. Yeah.

IM: I think that Father Gromoff has Alex Ermeloff's star. And Peter Lukanin, they had one, too. They brought it in here. They took it down. They used to have about four stars.

RH: That's a lot.

IM: They couldn't find anything. I thought to tell Nick Lekanoff about that. I tried to tell about that my daddy Andrew Makarin's he brought the church house, ah, one, church house book for kids born, you know, they take them to the Biorka and write them down there. And I tried to tell Nick about that. They have it down at the church house all this time. He said, "No. They don't have it." I said, "Yes, I know my daddy was telling us about that." They got a old Biorka church house [book] down church house. Some of them they give it to Eskimos I guess. I don't know.

RH: Ah, to other churches. I don't want to keep you too long.

IM: Yeah.

RH: Let me ask you one more question, though. You didn't have any doctors, of course.

IM: No.

RH: But who took care like when a baby was born? Who helped?

IM: Ah, my mama, Ester.

RH: Ester was a midwife.

IM: Used to let that that Nick Galaktionoff's wife have baby, in the Biorka. He died in the Borka. Then Elsie Yatchmenoff, she had a baby in a Borka. He died, that one, too. Anna, I think Anna Ermeloff. Maybe she born here; maybe in the Biorka. I don't know. I never asked her.

RH: And I know that you used to get some Aleut medicines here, too.

IM: Yeah. My dad, he knows the Aleut medicines. You know putchkies?

RH: Um-hmm.

IM: They got an under the ground, you know, that long thing, the round one, those are really Aleut medicine. If somebody, her back hurts really bad, my daddy used to dig in the putchkies and pull it out and they clean it. Then they cook the steam bath. The old timer's grass [Laughs], white grass—

RH: Yeah, the old grass, the dead grass—

IM: They took them over to the steam bath and they wrap 'em with that old time white grasses, really good, boy. They wouldn't let anybody touch that.

RH: That root. [*Angelica lucida* L., Seacoast Angelica, Strong Putchki]

IM: They'd wrap them up and wrap them up. Then they took it to steam bath, then they pour it on the hot water. They got hot water in the steam bath. Cook a steam bath and they get hot water. And they pour it in there. Then afterwards, somebody got trouble with his back, after that person take a bath, arrange himself, they open it and cut it, just like a carrot [?] and they put it on his back. About five minutes they keep it in there. They won't let him wear clothes or nothing, cause they're really hot, you know. The next day, after two days, the person that had trouble with his back, he's okay.

RH: He's okay. Wow.

IM: They do that to my mom. Gee, I was crying. "What they do to my mom?" You know. They took her to the steam bath and then daddy picked one up and they wrapped it with that grasses, old grasses. They poured water in there. Mama couldn't do anything with her back and his husband took her to the steam bath and then they opened it and cut it—

RH: Did they put the root right on the skin or—

IM: Yeah.

RH: —something underneath?

IM: All that white stuff, just like a cream-like, they go on the skin. Then they let them stay in there for two days. And when mama wanted to get up, her husband wouldn't let her get up.

RH: They let them stay there for—with that on them.

IM: They let them stay there for two days and then after a while my mom was just nice and healthy.

RH: Wow. Excellent.

IM: I know Aleut tea. Used to pick 'em up from outside. 'Cause those Biorka people have a hard time to get tea in the winter time, cause the weather is bad, to come in here. My daddy. My daddy never used to be poor.

RH: Um-hm. Get everything he needed.



IM: All the people that were poor needed tea, flour, sugar. Stuff like that. My daddy give some to all the Biorka people.

RH: Ah. Very generous.

IM: Yeah. My daddy used to tell me that if there's somebody hungry, if there's somebody got no place to stay, you just help them. Give 'em food. Let 'em eat food. If they got no place to stay, let them sleep on the floor. I know that.

RH: Yeah. He was a wonderful person.

IM: Yeah. I learned a lot of stuff from my daddy, Andrew Makarin.

RH: Well, thank you Irene.

IM: But some of them I forgot though! [Laughs] I don't know how they do that! Yeah.

RH: Yeah.

IM: Yeah. I was talking about that Aleut tea. I think they've got some around here.

They pick them up in September. September or October. Aleut tea. Then they brought it in here and they dry 'em up.

RH: Yeah.

IM: Dry 'em up for one week. Before they have it. Those people, before they have that tea. And they'd put black tea in there, mix it with them.

RH: Ah, ah. Then it goes father.

IM: Yeah. My daddy never used to be poor. He had a lot of food, yeah. Helping those people in Biorka.

RH: I always got the impression in reading that the Biorka people—

IM: I forgot how you say that. They're talking about that in Aleut. Aleut eye medicine outside the summer time.

RH: Ah. Oh, oh, yes. The eye medicine, on a pond?

IM: Yeah.

RH: Like an oil or something.

IM: Like an oil.

RH: On the pond. And you'd put it on your eyes.

IM: If you ever do that, you have to wash yourself good. My daddy used to have a small teaspoon cause my mama had trouble with her eyes, after they got blind. Daddy used to

put it in a jar and after they brought it home and put it in a small jar and mama washed his eyes and rinsed it and used the—

RH: He'd drop it in. One drop?

IM: One drop. Looks like. I don't know how they do that.

RH: One other question and I'll stop. Your dad, Andrew Makarin, could read Aleut.

IM: Yeah.

RH: Who taught him? How did he learn to read Aleut?

IM: I don't even know! [Laughs]

RH: Okay!

IM: Ah, yeah, all the Biorka people, all the mens, they know Aleut.

RH: They all know it.

IM: And they used to write them down.

RH: Yeah, ah.

IM: I don't know what they do with them.

RH: Right, I don't either.

IM: That's pretty hard. I think, 'cause I know Anna Mercurieff's grandpa, Alec Ermeloff, used to have that thick—

RH: Thick book.

IM: —Aleut, write 'em down in Aleut. My daddy used to do that, too. I don't know what they do with it.

RH: Yeah, like a journal. Yeah. Yeah.

IM: And George Yatchmenoff. All the Biorka men, they're growing up, their daddy teaching them. That's why they know it, that's why. Even you go out hunting, they write it down in Aleut.

RH: Ah. So they'd keep a record of what they caught? What they hunted?

IM: Yeah. Sea lion, fox, hair seal, any kind of ducks, ducks. They write them down. I used to go over there watching my dad. "Whatcha doing, dad?" He'd talk Aleut to me, talk Aleut to me and say write 'em down. "I don't know what you're talking about!"

[Laughs]

RH: Well, wonderful. Well, thank you. I'm going to stop this.

IM: Thank you.

## 9. Moses Gordieff

June 9, 2004

[This interview took place at the Unalaska Senior Center Common Room where Moses was helping to prepare lunch. Various background noises are coming from the kitchen. The interview was short because he needed to get back to work. Moses took part in Camp Qungaayux, the summer Unangan skills camp, where he made a bent wood visor. He had serious heart problems for many years and passed away in Anchorage on September 24, 2004.]

Ray Hudson: yeah, okay. I think, ah, ah, this is an interview with Moses Gordieff at Unalaska on June 9<sup>th</sup> —

Moses Gordieff: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: 2004. Ah, Moe, how old were you when you came back from the war, from World War II, from the evacuation?

MG: I was six.

RH: You were six. Okay. Were you born here at Unalaska?

MG: I was born and raised here. Ah, September 3, 1939. Down in the old hospital down there.

RH: Oh, yeah.

MG: I was born there.

RH: Oh, wow. [pause] Your grandfather [was] Elia Makarin?

MG: After my adoption, yeah.

RH: Oh, okay.

MG: My real mom and dad was Molly and Peter Lukanin. And she couldn't take care of me after she ended up in the TB hospital, her and my dad down in Southeast during the war.

RH: Oh, okay. Right.

MG: Agrifina Makarin was going to be the one she appointed to adopt me and she couldn't sign her name so Myria adopted me.

RH: Oh, all right. All right.

MG: I was adopted in Wrangle, August 5, 1942. So growing up I knew Martha as my real sister, her and Margaret—Margaret Makarin—

RH: Yeah.

MG: I was raised with them. And I never met my real mom and dad 'til I was thirteen.

RH: Oh, wow.

MG: After they got out of the hospital. I found out that they both had one lung from that TB they had.

RH: Yeah.

MG: Yeah, they both had one lung.

RH: I remember meeting Molly the first year or so I was here.

MG: Yeah?

RH: Yeah. Now Gordieff. . . . ah. . .

MG: Mom Myria was married to John Gordieff.

RH: John Gordieff.

MG: Yeah.

RH: Now, he was from Chernofski or?

MG: Ah? I don't know where he was from. But he lived in that house that used to be down by the creek, right by the church.

RH: Oh, okay, on the other side of—

MG: You know Victor Gordieff?

RH: Yes.

MG: That was his father. That's who he's married to.

RH: To Myria?

MG: Yeah.

RH: And how do you spell Gordieff? G-O-R-D-

MG: G-O-R-D-I-E-F-F

RH: Okay, good. Because I've seen it spelled differently.

MG: There's another Gordieff in Anchorage. He's a deacon, George Gordieff.

RH: Ah.

MG: So, he calls me brother, too, now 'cause my mom Myria raised him.

RH: Oh.

MG: I didn't know that, see. When she was married to George. So I found I've got a half-brother in Anchorage who's a deacon in the Orthodox church. It's great. He calls me up and sees me every time I go in for a check-up.

RH: Good, good. Now, when you came back here after the war, what was the first thing that happened here? Like the first day you came back?

MG: Gee, I barely remember it. But I know we stayed in a Quonset hut. Right up where that church is right now.

RH: Oh, right over here on the edge of the lake.

MG: Yeah, they had a gate down here by the old school, by the old power house there?

RH: Yeah.

MG: Marti said we used to have to get a pass to go to church. Military was still here then. In order to go out toward the dump to pick berries, we had to get a pass to go out there. And the mess hall we used to eat in, part of it is still there. See where that, ah, [he points out the window]

RH: Oh, yeah. Right on the corner there.

MG: See where the two, ah—

RH: Used to be two Quonset huts coming off of it?

MG: Yeah. That's where we used to eat. I remember going there. It was a little scary but fun! [Laughs]

RH: Probably if you were thirteen it would be a lot of fun.

MG: I was seven then.

RH: Oh, seven. Okay.

MG: It was kind of fun, but scary. We finally put our house where it is. Well, we used to stay in a little house. You know where Verne's first store used to be?

RH: Yeah.

MG: That little, ah, right across from Alice Tutiakoff's place?

RH: Ah, right. Yeah.

MG: Matfey had a little house there. Then that was vandalized so they moved us out of there. And where we're at now used to belong to old man Peter Samakensky. My grandpa Elia bought that, that lot from him, for twenty-five dollars.

RH: Wow.

MG: I've still got the deed to that. So that's my property now.

RH: Now Elia came from Biorka?

MG: Yeah.

RH: Yeah.

MG: And his wife was my godmother. She was born in Akutan.

RH: Oh, all right.

MG: So he met her over there when he worked at the whaling station. And they came here.

RH: And they moved here before the war, is that right?

MG: Yeah. They moved here. Well, they stayed at, well, we always stayed out at Biorka then.

RH: Oh, you did.

MG: Yeah.

RH: Oh, because that's where Molly, no, because that's where he was originally from.

MG: Yeah.

RH: Yeah. Now, his brother was Andrew Makarin—is that right?

MG: Yeah. His picture is right up there. [Indicates the bulletin board]

RH: I'll bring it down. [pause]

MG: Irene gave me a copy of it, too, so I've got one at home now. I'm going to get it enlarged.

RH: I can get it enlarged for you. Because actually, Shelly, my wife, made these copies.

MG: Oh, she did?

RH: So I can send it to you.

MG: Yeah, that will be great. I'd like two of them. I'll give one to Laresa for the boys.

RH: Actually, I gave her some.

MG: Oh, you did?

RH: I did.

MG: Oh, great, great.

RH: I didn't think of it, Moe, but I can send you some.

MG: I'd like a couple anyway.

RH: I'll be happy to. So, this is, on the far right—

MG: That's Elia and his wife, my godmother, Agrifina. Andrew Makarin, his brother. And Andrew's wife Eustina.

RH: Eustina.

MG: Yeah. She was blind. Somebody was sick or something wrong with 'em, they used to call her. I remember I had trouble with my stomach or something. They had her come down and she used her hands, rubbing all over me for a long time. I was all right afterwards.

RH: Wow. Wow.

MG: This was taken right in front of our house after church.

RH: Ah, okay. That's why they're all in suits and dressed up.

MG: Yeah. [Laughs]

RH: Now, Andrew was a reader in the church.

MG: Yes.

RH: Was Elia a reader?

MG: No. He'd help with candles and stuff. Or, he'd watch the outside door. Let people in and out. Help them on windy days or something. Used to have a doorman all the time in the church.

RH: After the war, did he go trapping at all?

MG: No. He worked in the Pribilofs for a while and then after a while he couldn't work no more.

RH: Okay.

MG: 'Cause in 1955, after we moved down there, no, we moved down there in '50 – '46, to the house we're in now, where I'm staying. Yeah. I remember all of us were living there. There were 7 or 8 of us living in that house then. Uncle Andrew helped us, our grandpa, well, his brother, to fix that place up. And when he got his place, the army put his cabanna in position, he stayed with us while they worked on his place.

RH: After he moved over from, ah, ah,

MG: Yeah, after the war. Makushin, Kashega, and Biorka, the government wouldn't let them move back. Ah, that was stupid.

RH: Yeah. Right, right.





MG: That's why, I think, was when part of our heritage started dropping, too.

RH: Yeah, because living in those smaller villages where you hunted all the time and fished and—

MG: Yeah Yeah. We all lived together for awhile while we were working on Uncle Andrew's house. I remember seeing all them people helping each other, you know, build their homes.

RH: Yeah, after the war.

MG: Almost all the Natives were all carpenters anyway.

RH: I know Andrew used to make models of baidarkas and stuff.

MG: Yeah, my dad did, too. Larry Shaishnikoff got one of his. I started trying to make one. [Laughs] I'm sorry I quit. But it was fun.

RH: That's a whole huge collection of skills.

MG: Yeah.

RH: To make something like that. Now, did you ever work up in the Pribilofs?

MG: Yeah. I was in school and Elia wasn't making so much and my mom Myria was working for the old school. That's where I went to school, the old school. When I was 15 I quit school to go to work up the Islands. Walter Dyakanoff and Charlie Hope told me, "Oh, tell them you're sixteen and you can go to work." So I went to work to help, you know, the family. Things were kinda going up in price, I think.

RH: And things were hard here after the war, I think.

MG: Yeah.

RH: There was an economic depression and—

MG: Yeah, everything was pretty hard. Yeah. I went to work when I was fifteen up the Islands. I worked there from 1955 to 1963. I went to work for a hundred-and-fifty bucks a month.

RH: Wow.

MG: It was a lot of money, boy! [Laughs] Great! I bought my first wood and coal stove for the house. Still got that stove, too.

RH: Where did you get coal from in those days?

MG: Oh, we used to go up the lake up here, the road straight up here, where the old sack pile used to be by the mouth of the creek up there. Well, on the right hand side as you go

inside that little lagoon, there used to be a pile of coal. We used to have to dig for it, though. We used to get maybe 50, 60 sacks of coal, military gunny sacks. They used to find a lot of them in the old buildings and stuff. We'd fill those up and bring them back, row them back down. There was Bill Zaharoff's boat we used, and two families and we'd go out and get coal and bring it down and share it half and half.

RH: You and the Zaharoffs?

MG: Yeah. We'd spend all day out there. Take dry fish out, smoked salmon, take the kettle, bread and everything, spend the whole day out.

RH: Neat.

MG: It was good. You know, working together. Now we got wood and have to go down there and cut it. We used to help pack wood home with a wheel-barrow or something before we could go out and play after school. Get all the chores done.

RH: How long would you have to let that wood season before you could use it?

MG: Well, it was always on the beach drying, you know. We chopped it up right away and stacked it. It was good. Wood and coal for the winter. During the summer you'd make about two or three trips up there to get coal. We had an old big coal bin outside grandpa built so we had enough coal for all winter. Wood was stacked up for all winter. It was great. In 1956, after I got my first oil stove, the wood stove we had, my uncle Peter Galaktionoff, he helped us convert it to oil.

RH: Oh, okay.

MG: So we had an oil stove. Well, in the back room we had a little wood stove yet. Well, it was good. After working at the Islands, in 1958 I joined the National Guard. I was seventeen. I took my basic training down in Fort Ord, California. I turned 18 down there. I spent six years in the National Guard.

RH: Wow.

MG: That was good, too. California, Fort Lewis, Washington. Every March we'd go into Anchorage for two weeks of basic training.

RH: So you'd be out here and then go into Anchorage?

MG: Yeah. For basic training. Our little group from here and group from St. Paul and St. George. Bethel. They were all over the state.

RH: Who else went from here?

MG: There was me and Kusta, Simeon Lekanoff, Greg Golodoff — Greg Golodoff!  
[corrects himself] Greg—

RH: Shapsnikoff.

MG: Greg Shapsnikoff, my uncle. Neon, Nick Lekanoff, Coco, Larry Shaishnikoff.  
Myself.

RH: Quite a few.

MG: Victor Gordieff. Yeah, there was a few. And our sergeant was May Dyakanoff's  
husband, Harvey Reinkin. Well, he was a master sergeant. He's the one that started it  
here. What the hell, ninety-eight bucks a month!

RH: Yeah! Yeah. That was good. How would you get in? Would you take the mailboat  
in or fly in?

MG: No, we flew in. When the DC-3 was running. But to the Pribilofs we took the old  
*Penguin*, government boat. I never liked staying there, you know. People from here,  
Nikolski, Atka and Akutan. All crowded down in the cargo hold. It was just like slaves.  
It was a 16 hour trip, but goddamn it was terrible because we had to eat down in the hold,  
wash dishes down in the hold. One little bathroom down there. It smelled. Some of the  
oldtimers, the younger guys, some of them would get seasick. You could smell that,  
smell the oil from the engine room.

RH: Yeah.

MG: It was rough.

RH: What was your first job up there?

MG: [Laughs] Garbage detail! "The village truck" we called it. Yeah, damn.

RH: Nick Galaktionoff was saying his first job he worked on the road.

MG: Road gang? I been on that, too. Then from there I worked at, ah, the second year  
they put me in the by-products. That's where they ground up all the seal carcasses.

RH: Oh, okay, for fertilizer?

MG: Yeah. Then the seal blubber that they got from the blubber shop they made seal oil  
out of that in 50 galleon drums. Ship those all out. Everything went to St. Louis,  
Missouri. From there I got transferred to the barrel shop where we barreled the skins, put  
'em in barrels. Eight-five skins to a barrel.

RH: Wow.

MG: Sometimes they'd kill—the highest kill we had was 5,000. So we barrel 5,000.

The next day could be maybe 3 or 4,000. It was a lot of work. I worked there until '63.

RH: Now, when men worked up there did they ever send seal meat back here?

MG: Well, we got to bring some home with us.

RH: Okay.

MG: Yeah.

## Postscript

The resettlement of Kashega by George Borenin and Cornelius Kudrin preserved the appearance of a village for a decade after the war. Without wives or children or any extended family present, however, the men had little hope for success. By 1959 Cornelius had a home at Unalaska.<sup>i</sup> George was the village's only resident by 1956.<sup>ii</sup> He continued to divide his time between Kashega and Unalaska until illness and age forced him to live at Unalaska where Jenabe and Elaine Caldwell gave him the use of a small cabin for the remainder of his life. He died in the summer of 1966.

Irene Makarin recalled that six families left Biorka in 1952. Nick Galaktionoff suggests the date was later, perhaps as late as 1956. With summer employment in the Pribilof Islands and extended stays by individuals and families at Unaslaska, the resettlement of Biorka was neither continuous nor assured. Nick described how terrible winds wrecked houses and the church at a time when the people were absent. A remarkable storm struck the eastern Aleutians on March 10, 1952. This may have been the storm that devastated Biorka Village. According to John Fletcher, manager of the Northern Commercial Company store at Unalaska, it was the worst he had seen in over 25 years. The store was closed as the storm intensified.

The huge coal warehouse started breaking into sections and flying six to 700 feet through the air, mostly landing in the bay nearby. Over on Dutch Harbor Island we could see 'Cabanos' —small buildings— turning over and over, then falling apart and blowing completely off the island into the sea.<sup>iii</sup>

The next morning, extensive damage was observed during a brief calm. "Two warehouses, the company's biggest, were in shambles. Fences were either wrecked or

completely gone. Chimneys were down and fires in kitchen stoves were blown out.” Late that afternoon the storm returned with even great violence. “The wind tower at the Dutch Harbor air weather station across the bay,” Fletcher wrote, “was torn off when the blow reached 140 miles per hour, so the top speed remains a mystery.” “The upper part of Unalaska Valley,” he wrote, “was minus twenty-one buildings by actual count after the storm.” This section of Unalaska included the route from Ugadaga Bay used by the Biorka people. The damage suggests this storm also hit Biorka on Sedanka Island across Beaver Inlet.

Chief Alex Ermeloff died at Unalaska and was buried on November 5, 1956.<sup>iv</sup> Andrew Makarin’s role in the last years of Biorka was central. He exemplified the finest qualities that Veniaminov, St. Innocent, discovered in the Unangan of his day: intelligence, vast traditional knowledge rooted in a particular landscape, literacy in Aleut, devout faith and extraordinary tenacity in the face of immense trials. Although Unalaska itself had a number of accomplished church officials (Anfesia Shapsnikoff and John Golodoff in particular), Andrew’s skills and dignified bearing soon made him an integral part of the Unalaska Orthodox community. He conducted services, baptized infants, and held funerals. Despite his involvement with Unalaska, in one sense he held to the hope of resettlement of Biorka for years after the Biorka people had moved into Unalaska. Finally, near the end of his life, he returned to the village with some younger companions. Together they razed the Chapel of St. Nicholas and built a protective shelter over the consecrated site of the altar. He died on June 25, 1969.<sup>v</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> 1959 Real and Personal Property Roll. Elinore Putney, City Clerk. March 19, 1959. City of Unalaska

<sup>ii</sup> Thomsen, Niels P. *The Mailboat Monitor*. Vol. 1, No. 5. November 1956:4

<sup>iii</sup> Fletcher, John. “The Big Blow” in *The N.C. Flag*, a quarterly published by the Northern Commercial Company. June 1952

<sup>iv</sup> Thomsen, Niels P. *The Mailboat Monitor*. Vol. 1, No. 6. December 1956

<sup>v</sup> *The Unalaskan*. June 30, 1969:1